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ASIAN BALANCE OR CHINA 'TILT'
PETER KOVLER

ITALY TRIES FOR NUMBER 37
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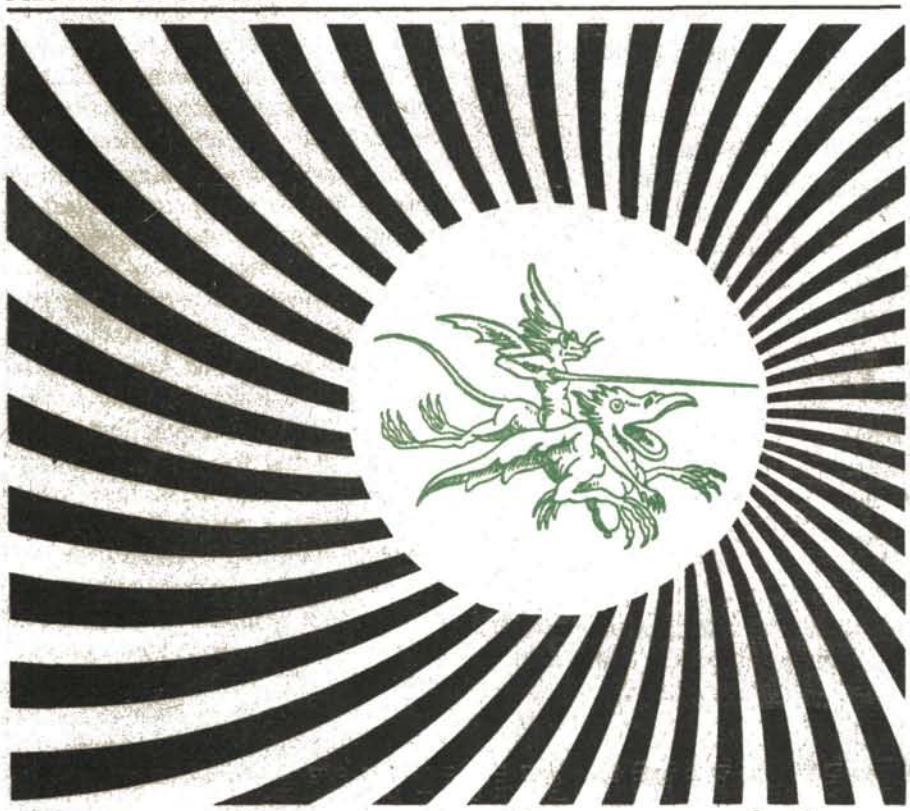
HISTORY HOME TO ROOST
ABIGAIL McCARTHY



Into the secular void
CULTS & CHARISMATIC FIGURES
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A PUEBLA DIARY
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ON SCHILLEBEECKX

Jean Bethke Elshtain
UNDER THE LASCH

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LITERARY PLACES

Gerald Weales
TENNESSEE'S WALTZ

Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.
MALE OF THE SPECIES

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Correspondence

No relativist he

Milwaukee, Wisc.

To the Editors: Probably it is an ingrate author who would criticize one part of a review when in the rest of the review the author's book is called "brightly written," "remarkably erudite," "light years away from practically everything philosophers have been turning out recently in this field," "brilliant," etc. Yet I believe I must thank Robert O. Johann for his review of my *The Moral Choice* [Jan. 19] and still point out for the record that his charge of "relativism" is quite unfounded.

Johann says that my "foundational moral experience" is "particular" and "contingent" because it is one which some persons "could be without." Johann would have me posit a foundational moral experience that would be "implicit in all experience." In his view, that would save me from particularism and relativism and provide a "rational" and universal basis for moral action.

All of this shows only that Johann and I are working out of different cognitional theories. I say that the foundational moral experience—that persons are so valuable that one might reasonably lay down one's life for them—is universally knowable but not universally known. Must I, to avoid relativism, say it is "implicit" in those who evince no "knowledge" of it—"moral barbarians" in my special usage of that term. Only a rationalistic conception of the foundations of morality could suggest that. And here is the crux of my disagreement with Johann.

Johann speaks twice of the "rational basis" of moral behavior. My argument, to which he does not speak, and which is central to my cognitional theory, is that the basis or morality is not merely rational, but also affective, mystical, and a product of faith. If moral knowledge were indeed only rational, it could be implicit in all human experience. What the rationalistic tradition misses is that you do not abstractly and implicitly experience and know the value of persons the way you know, for example, the principle of non-contradiction. There is in moral knowledge what the Thomistic tradition called "affective knowledge."

Johann judges that I am not really interested in "basic cognitional theory applied to ethics." That would be true only if there were but one cognitional theory.

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE
Theology Department
Marquette University

Original ethical realism

Rockville Centre, N.Y.

To the Editors: I was startled by the many inaccuracies of Mr. Johann's review of Daniel C. Maguire's more recent book, *The Moral Choice* [Jan. 19]. . . .

I used *The Moral Choice* in my fall courses on ethics. The work incorporates the neglected role of creative imagination and affectivity. Ethics is not based on logic or sterile reason. To the contrary of one of Mr. Johann's statements, Maguire's ethical realism, if properly understood, cannot lead to relativism or to subjectivism.

What Maguire does achieve—something which Mr. Johann does not seem to grasp—is an original ethical epistemology which ultimately liberates moral man by balancing traditional and contemporary insights. Maguire develops his method and interrelates his ideas in such a unique way that he allows for practical implications without resorting to rigid structures.

However, I do agree with Mr. Johann's observation that Maguire's *Moral Choice* "is light years away from practically everything philosophers have been turning out recently in this field."

A. NICHOLAS FARGNOLI
Molloy College

Was Minh a distraction?

Narberth, Pa.

To the Editors: James Forest's article on "A Vietnamese Martyr: The parable of the unresponsive witnesses" [Dec. 22] continues a campaign by him that has served the U.S. government extremely well in diverting attention from the rise of a literal empire of torture and death squads in the U.S. sphere of influence and in justifying its policy of inflicting further damage on the peoples of Indochina.

Forest implies that "we" are all guilty for failing to protest in the case of Thich Thien Minh, who died in a Vietnamese prison under unknown circumstances. The foolishness of this position is suggested by its further implication that "we" must also be guilty for not protesting the sufferings of each and every one of the 15,000 people who have "disappeared" in Argentina since the 1976 coup. Since we all have finite energies, it is irresponsible demagoguery to pretend that any of us can protest even a substantial minority of on-going abuses. We must invariably choose, and we look in vain for Forest to explain to us just why we should have chosen Minh. The analogy with Kitty Genovese goes even beyond demagoguery, since Genovese was murdered, Minh was not, as far as we know, and Jim Forest has not vigorously protested every case of known political *murder*. If the test is severity of violence, should we not be protesting the huge number of cases of known killing and torture? In Argentina there are several dozen separate detention centers where extremely savage tortures are carried out and where hundreds if not thousands have died. Consider also that Argentina is in our sphere of influence, still getting some military aid and huge loans from U.S. and world financial institutions. We ought to be able to exert real leverage in this case, assuming a genuine interest in alleviating human distress and avoiding being "silent witnesses" where silence counts. Forest fails to explain why Minh deserves higher priority treatment.

Forest quotes Thich Nhat Hahn: "I fear not many 'peace' organizations will notice this event or respond to it with the energy they might give had it happened

(Continued on page 157)

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IN DEFENSE OF GOVERNMENT

AMERICANS have traditionally been "agin' the guv'mint." From quarrelsome colonist to John Cabdriver, they have treated politicians, state agencies, tax obligations, and bureaucrats with the same enthusiasm they assign to bad weather, nagging physical afflictions, and country varmints. Nonetheless this mood of cheerful and somewhat resigned contempt has usually been tempered, in fact been partly caused by, the belief that government is actually supposed to do something for you, that it does, after all, have a positive purpose—which it is never quite living up to. In the twentieth century this belief was reinforced by the Progressive and New Deal response to the growth of capitalism and the disarray of the economy. The anti-government spirit never disappeared, however; nor should it. But it is running at high tide right now. Not since Herbert Spencer and the nastier forms of social Darwinism have there been so many intelligent people bent upon proclaiming that the state is the enemy.

What accounts for this climate of opinion is a remarkable convergence of different views. In the '60s, those who had been protective of the New Deal heritage grew dissatisfied with the inability of these programs to eliminate poverty. From the Left came charges of the use of social services to pacify or control the powerless. From the Right came accusations of waste and corruption. The federal government bore the brunt of resentment from whites who thought desegregation was going too fast and too recklessly, from both blacks and whites who thought it was going too slow and too cautiously. Then the war and Watergate, with all the attending credibility gaps and revelations about Pentagon, FBI, CIA and White House incursions on individual rights, cast a general pall over the exercise of federal power. Meanwhile, it was state and local government where the real growth, though not the political controversy, was occurring, a fact to which voters suddenly awakened. Thus Proposition 13 and constitutional convention fever.

These widespread currents of feeling were backed by new views among governing elites and opinion-shapers. Under attack for environmental irresponsibility, big business rebounded with a barrage of publicity about overregulation. Ivan Illich's talk of "deschooling" found a certain echo in Mobil's talk of "deregulation." Repeating Nixon's claim that the Great Society had been an orgy of "throwing money at problems," neoconservatives hoped to fend off what they imagined was a collapse of government authority by proposing that social ambitions had to be held back: many of our vexing problems, they suggested, were nearly insoluble anyway. The rise of neoconservatism was linked, in addition, with the growing role of economists in formulating social policy, a group occupationally conditioned to look fondly upon market solutions. At a more emotional level, the Gulag, the ubiquity of Third World dictatorships, and the economic travails of Great Britain were all invoked to warn Americans of the dangers or (alternatively) the

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inefficiency of state initiatives. The state was on the verge, as Senator Moynihan once wrote, of choosing our spouses. No wonder that big business and neoconservatism were joined by a revival of native libertarianism. In fact, a striking alliance has been forged between the doctrinaire libertarians who always rejected the post-New Deal welfare state on principle and many '60s radicals whose social concerns led to a disenchantment with government measures or a fear of government control. If this alliance is not extended to big business and the neoconservatives, it is only because of the former's attachment to *its* favorite government subsidies and the latter's support of a massive defense establishment.

What is happening is unfortunate and no service to our society. Not because government hasn't expanded its powers and range of concerns in ways that bear careful watching—though in fact the expansion has been much less than many people suppose. (The ratio of federal expenditures to the GNP has stayed remarkably steady for two decades; federal employment has decreased, relatively speaking; and total tax revenues are a lower percentage of GNP in the U.S. than in every other industrial country except Japan.) And not because, case by case, there may be better ways of solving problems than by state initiative or government regulation. Each instance should be argued on its merits. It is precisely that which the new climate of opinion is rendering difficult.

Philosophically, of course, the anti-state fervor frequently reveals an individualism that does justice neither to the social nature of humans nor to the interdependence of our political and economic life, an individualism too often reflecting the status of upper-middle-class activists who can afford to be uninterested in the mechanisms the state does provide—barely—to cushion the vulnerable from hardship. This mentality smacks of "doing your own thing," now transformed into a *pro bono publico* crusade.

Practically, the new outlook simply screens out a great deal of contemporary reality. Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus have employed the effective term "megastructure" to describe the large, bureaucratic institutions that dominate our public lives and contribute to the sense of powerlessness and alienation in the culture. The state is but one of these megastructures, which include the giant corporations (in many instances now even escaping the control of nation-states), labor organizations and educational and professional bureaucracies. And if the state suffers from being, in the phrase Senator Moynihan applied to the federal bureaucracy, a "pea-brained dinosaur," some of these other megastructures are anything but pea-brained. The clumsiness as well as the bulkiness of the government often seems nothing but a desperate consequence of trying to keep up with new problems spawned by dynamic but essentially self-interested corporate megastructures. There is even a sort of safety in pea-brainedness, a safety one does not sense when contemplating the remarkable ability of great corporations to bend every political, technological, and cultural resource to their private benefit.

The problem is complicated further by the fact that these megastructures—government, corporations, labor, professions, education—have reshaped but by no means entirely eliminated the market, with its capacity both for helpful reallocation of resources and energies and for enormous dislocation and human wreckage. Perhaps it takes a time of economic constraints and uncertainty like the present to remind people that these other megastructures, together with the fluctuations of the market, do determine their lives in a thorough-going fashion—do shape when, if not whom, they marry, where they will live, whether one parent or two will be home with children, what are the chances that unemployment will strain personal ties or demoralize young people or spur social disintegration. The more subtle ways in which these megastructures, combined with the market, create an atmosphere of hedonism, dissolve communities, and erode political culture and discourse, are no less important for being less visible.

Neither these other megastructures nor the market are going to be controlled without the instrumentality of the state. No one should deny the difficulty of this task, the difficulty even of preventing the state from becoming the tool of these other bureaucratic giants. But to admit the anti-government premises of the day is to abdicate before the work has even begun.

THE NEXT ENCYCLICAL

Now that the Latin American Bishops, with the offstage help of the prominent theologians who had been excluded from the conference, have published their final CELAM III message exhorting the people of God of Latin America, and through them all the people of the world, to become "selfless builders of the 'civilization of love' "; and now that the secular and religious press have had time to reflect and respond, the Puebla meeting can be seen as a decisive moment in the self-education and growth of the Latin American church and the world-wide church that watched its deliberations so anxiously. It signaled growth as well for the new Pope who boldly flew into a new situation and then adapted his later speeches to identify himself more obviously with the cause of the poor. Thus, a *National Review* reporter reportedly told a *Christian Century* (February 28) correspondent that the Pope was "100 percent communist," the *New York Times* (February 26) more-or-less took back its off-base January 30 editorial lamenting that the Pope had "rejected political involvement," and the *National Catholic Reporter* confidently headlined a March 2, Rome NC news service story, "Pope Backs Liberation Theology."

Meanwhile, according to a number of reports, something else is afoot: John Paul II, described as a decisive, self-confident theologian who does most of his own writing, is at work on his first encyclical, indeed the first encyclical since *Humanae Vitae* dissipated the authority of that literary form just over ten years ago. Perhaps we can discern its outline in his Puebla address, heavily weighed down as it was with references to the Scriptures, Church Fathers, Vatican II and the writings of his predecessors. And we can see its subject recurring in his addresses since then. He has, in a sense, co-opted

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the term "liberation theology," and developed his own formulation in dialogue with, rather than opposition to, the Latin American theologians. He says, in effect, that the message of Christ is meant to liberate man—the *whole human person*, not just the "soul," as if religion were concerned only with man's "supernatural" destiny—from all forms of evil: from, as John Paul said recently, "every social injustice, discrimination, violence inflicted by man against the body, the spirit, the conscience or human conviction." Christ teaches, he said, "a special sensitivity toward man, toward human dignity, toward human life, toward spirit and body."

It might be too early in his reign for this Pope, even as brilliant as he may be, to address the elusive issue which is at the heart of both the Gospel and the church's official teaching, and one with which the church has had the least obvious practical success: the rendering of economic and social justice—especially when, in so many places, the other great social encyclicals, *Quadragessimo Anno, Pacem in Terris* and *Populorum Progressio*, were whispers in the wind. But if he writes it, we have some suggestions: (1) The language should be clear and direct, not the usual Vaticanese designed to obscure rather than reveal the papal mind; (2) He should discuss the status of women (although at this stage we are not confident about what he would say). If he looked carefully at the crowds in Mexico he must have seen that many women had more children than they could feed or care for. It seems to us that if the church is to hold credibility in its fight against abortion, it must open the door to family planning. (3) Finally, if the church is to gain long-range credibility as friend of the poor, it must develop and publish policies on the management and distribution of its own investments and wealth. We know that this is the favorite "Catholic" topic of novelists and columnists; but this consistent interest may well indicate a deep popular desire for some living example of how the riches of the earth should be used. (4) Perhaps he should call it *Personae Humanae Dignitas*, and begin: "The dignity of the human person, understood in the light of the Gospel, and above all in view of injustices which oppress the individual today, makes special demands on Christians as they participate in public life. . . ."

The Communist war

OUR CHINA 'TILT'

HOW ABOUT 'PEACE NOW'?

AFTER A LIFETIME of criticizing a United States policy which shunted China aside, this reporter is in the awkward position, at least for the moment, of disliking the current U.S. infatuation with the People's Republic. While normalization was proper, sane and decades overdue, U.S. policymakers have, in a sense, overdone it. Most visibly and tragically, this is apparent in the U.S. reaction to the Vietnam-Cambodia and Vietnam-China wars. Instead of maintaining an evenhanded approach in these "Communist wars," the Carter administration has tilted toward China. Perhaps without even meaning to do it, the U.S. has erred.

Nevertheless, one main result has been to somewhat aggravate tensions in Southeast Asia. In battles which Sen. Patrick Moynihan (D. N.Y.), among others, has called the "possible beginnings of World War III," the U.S. has tended to act as a partisan rather than a neutral force which would mediate. While it would be pure thoughtless anti-Americanism to blame the fighting on U.S. decisions, still the U.S. has not used its considerable influence to help bring peace.

This is not to say that U.S. policy has been gung ho Chinese. At times the U.S. attitude seems to be that there is really nothing disastrous if one Communist country fights another. Even though the State Department has called for both China and Vietnam to stop their fighting, there has been neither action nor the threat of action to support the rhetoric. The administration's attitude is often reminiscent of the view toward Mafia wars where there is a platitudinous pronouncement to stop the killing but where, in truth, there is indifference: Let "them" kill "them"—as long as they don't come near "us." But this attitude has mostly given way to a pro-China position.

When Teng Hsiao-ping visited here in January, the warnings of an imminent Chinese invasion were so blatant that even a casual newspaper reader could have picked them up. Indeed, there have even been reports, although unconfirmed, that the U.S. was told there would be an invasion which would last from ten to twenty days. As the Vice-Premier made his way West, his verbal attacks on Vietnamese "hegemonism" became increasingly ominous. Everyone knew that Teng wanted to "punish" Vietnam. By the time he departed from Japan, few doubted that war was close.

In response, President Carter is supposed to have told Teng that he disapproved of any "incursion." Since the invasion the administration has, again, expressed its disapproval while reiterating the call for Vietnamese forces to leave Cambodia. In fact, our State Department has expressed so much disapproval that they are almost believable. But, in truth, such words are as meaningful as when the State Department in another era in Southeast Asia "disapproved" of Thieu's harsh regime.

If the U.S. were really sincere, it would have used real pressure on the Chinese. For years I have looked forward to U.S.-China trade but the stalling of trade could have been used as a lever to slow down the war and make the Chinese get out of Vietnam. Instead, the U.S. eagerly sends Treasury Secretary Blumenthal to Peking for economic talks with his hosts. Admittedly, Blumenthal has criticized his hosts for their "transgression." But to quote *Washington Star* reporter Lee Cohn who is in Peking, "Chinese leaders . . . refuse to take offense at the criticism." For all the emphasis that has been put on how the Chinese value formalities and courtesies, the U.S. government has managed to be publicly critical without in any way upsetting China. The only possible interpretation of this event

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is that from the Chinese viewpoint, Blumenthal is even less than a paper tiger; he is a paper tiger critic.

Perhaps the most perspicacious comments on Secretary Blumenthal's trip came from Sen. Charles Mathias (R. Maryland): "The Soviets may believe the U.S. gave the Vice-Premier a 'green light' for his attack on Vietnam, and China may feel it can do anything and not risk our criticism. The Secretary," he continued," has become part of the administration's misplayed 'China card.' The administration's decision to go ahead with (his) trip to China is a serious mistake. Dispatching a senior U.S. official to Peking seems only to send another warning signal to a dangerously troubled region."

A second policy which indicates the China tilt by the U.S. has been the way we have acted toward Vietnam. By treating their country during the war as a Soviet satellite, the U.S. has misunderstood (for a change) the Vietnamese and has invited them to oppose the U.S. directly. If the U.S. had relations with Vietnam, there would at least be a chance that—as in the Mideast—the U.S. could bring the parties together. But because the U.S. has snubbed Vietnam, it has meant that they have had to go to the only ones offering assistance, the Russians. In turn, this has meant that they have become part of the Sino-Soviet fight. Indeed, if one of the most strategic bases in Asia, Cam Ranh Bay, becomes a port for the Soviets, the U.S. will have only itself to blame.

But even before the China invasion, U.S.-Vietnam policy had taken a terrible turn for the worse. Whereas six months ago we were close to normalizing relations with Hanoi, in the intervening period an anti-Vietnam mood prevailed in the administration. As a result, normalization was dispensed with. The real reason for this may be something for historians to discover. But at present there are two theories. Either normalizing relations with Vietnam just "fell through the cracks" when China normalization began. Or, perhaps, it was made part of the U.S.-China normalization deal. Even though the evidence is now somewhat sketchy and circumstantial, one has to wonder at the coincidence of the U.S. effectively breaking off talks with Vietnam while, simultaneously, opening up relations with China. But whatever the reason, one thing is clear: With Vietnam, the U.S. continues to impose a trade embargo and will not normalize. With China, however, trade and diplomatic relations obviously could not be better.

In considering the issue of withdrawal, the U.S. has again portrayed itself as disinterested and evenhanded. Territorial boundaries should unquestionably be observed, goes the administration's thinking. But one must hope that the administration is not entirely serious on this matter when one considers what the results would probably be. That is, if Vietnam were to go along with the U.S. position and withdraw from Cambodia, doubtless the group returning to power would be Pol Pot's. Does the U.S. really want to see those bloodthirsty tyrants back in charge?

Finally, the Carter administration has failed to give credit where it is deserved—to the Russians. While the USSR has acted brutally in Eastern Europe and while it has been trying to expand its power in parts of Africa, in Southeast Asia, so far, it has acted with great restraint. As everyone tries to "save face," it is a pleasant surprise that the Russians have not come to the aid of Hanoi by attacking China. If the administration were really evenhanded (instead of still trying to seem tough toward the Russians for the sake of not appearing too dovish as it prepares to sell the SALT treaty), the congratulations would be in order.

I do not mean to suggest that the Vietnamese are pacifistic angels, the "victims" of "imperialistic" China and that, as a consequence, the U.S. should support them. On human rights, for example, Amnesty International reports that "there is still grave concern at the continued detention of tens of thousands of people who, so far as is known, have not been charged with any offense . . . (they are still in camps) more than three years since the change of Government in what was formerly South Vietnam." It's a mistake to believe that in East Asia there are "good guys" and "bad guys."

But what is most crucial is that, to borrow a phrase from another Vietnam war, there should be "peace now." Unquestionably, in some small ways the U.S. has pushed for this. For instance, leading the attempts to make the UN consider the war has been a good decision. More, the administration has pledged not to get militarily involved. Even if this seems like an empty gesture (after all, there isn't one person in the world who has publicly suggested otherwise), given the way our Presidents have acted in Southeast Asia, it is somewhat reassuring. But on the whole our moves have not been so sound.

If the U.S. continues to tilt toward China it can only make Southeast Asia look like even more of a tinderbox. As it is now, to most of the world it appears that the two superpowers have each taken one side. With that development, a local conflict takes on the possibility of becoming a worldwide one. But the U.S. could work meaningfully for peace if it would relinquish partisanship for true evenhandedness: We should be friends with China but we should also be friends with Vietnam. Sadly, however, that is not the way the administration views the Vietnam war.

PETER KOVLER

(Peter Kovler has written for the New York Times. The Nation *and other journals. He has served as legislative assistant and speech writer for several Washington political figures.)*

Report from Italy

TRYING FOR NUMBER 37

STALEMATE IN ITALY

NEGOTIATIONS are underway to form Italy's 37th government since the war following the collapse of the all-Christian Democrat government led by Giulio Andreotti. The minority government which depended on support

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from the Italian Communist Party for the first time in Italian history lasted less than a year.

From the moment of its dramatic birth only hours after the kidnapping of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades on March 16, the Andreotti government—supported on the outside by not only Communists (PCI), but Socialists (PSI), Social Democrats (PSDI) and Republicans (PRI) as well—has led anything but a tranquil life. In recent months, the word crisis had been heard with increasing frequency. Even before the end of January when the Communists announced their withdrawal from the majority, the collapse of the *monocolore* (one-color) government was seen as inevitable.

Andreotti and his cabinet had been increasingly under fire from those very parties (representing nearly 90 percent of the electorate) that composed the government majority. The smaller parties (PSDI, PRI and PSI) accused Andreotti of favoring the Communists, of creating a de facto PCI-DC regime at their expense. The Republicans attacked Andreotti's economic policies, insisting that too many concessions had been made to the trade unions.

Even Andreotti's own party had been showing signs of restlessness. Many Christian Democrats were wary of Andreotti's rapprochement with the Communists and his seeming indispensability. Pointing to the DC gains in recent local elections, some Christian Democratic members had been talking openly about the advantages of anticipated elections. (Normally elections should not be held until 1980.)

The most unhappy with the government formula—and the party that seemed to be losing the most ground electorally as a result of that formula—have been, however, the Communists. After nearly 12 months of collaboration with the DC, the PCI seemed to have nothing to gain from its entrance in the government majority and everything to lose.

Despite claims to the contrary, the Communists were not only not receiving preferential treatment from Andreotti, but were finding themselves continually at loggerheads with the Christian Democrats. The PCI, for example, opposed Italy's entrance into the European Monetary System: Andreotti announced Italy's decision a few days later to enter that European agreement. The Communists insisted that the working class not be forced to bear the brunt of the economic crisis: Andreotti boldly presented a three-year economic plan (called the Pandolfi plan) that called for wage freezes.

As the Christian Democratic Party perfected its stalling techniques—over university reform, pension reform, police reform, the agrarian contracts, the decentralization of the state television and the nominations of the heads of state agencies—the PCI continued to end up with egg on its face.

Political observers began to compare the inability of the Communists to condition the DC policies with the unfortunate period of *centro sinistra* (center left government) when the marriage of Christian Democrats and Socialists spelled disaster at the polls for the latter. Several local and regional elections in which the Communists lost considerable ground from their great leap forward in the 1976 political elections seemed to confirm that view.

The Communists were associating themselves with a government that had successfully blocked or sabotaged nearly every social reform bill that reached the floor of parliament, a government that was backing an antiworkers' economic plan and (perhaps the last straw), a government that could not control the wave of terrorism on the peninsula.

In return for supporting such a government, the Communists were facing an angry rank and file, a disturbing loss of votes and a deteriorating public order situation in which they were becoming the number-one target for terrorist actions. As Communist party leader Enrico Berlinguer met with the other parties of the majority to announce the PCI decision to pull out, the Red Brigades were gunning down Guido Rossa, a trade unionist and member of the PCI who had testified against a *brigatista* . A few days later a Milanese judge well-known for his left-wing views was shot dead.

Now the Communists are saying *basta* (enough). In his opening remarks at the party summit meeting, Berlinguer outlined the PCI position: "We have come to the conclusion, after a careful examination of the facts, that our presence in the majority that supports this government, has become impossible." The Communists accuse the Christian Democrats of foot-dragging, of reneging on the original agreement that had made the government—with the Communist support—possible, and of returning to an anti-Communist cold war mentality.

The other parties, while not endorsing all the Communists' criticisms, also agree that it is time for a change. Each party, however, has a slightly different version of what that change should be. Everyone is speaking of the need for a "government of national unity," but the interpretations of that term vary drastically.

Those differences are at the heart of the negotiations now taking place. What are the positions of the country's two largest parties?

The Christian Democrats say they are ready to discuss any change in the government formula—except one that would bring the PCI directly into the government. The PCI has insisted on the need for Communist ministers. A stalemate that will inevitably lead to anticipated elections? Perhaps not. Although the country's big two seem to be offering solutions to the political crisis that are mutually exclusive, there is still room for compromise.

Several hypotheses, some more probable than others, will certainly be considerered before the ballot boxes are readied.

1) a government without the DC. A highly unlikely prospect, but one which is numerically possible.

2) a DC government supported (either inside or out) by all the lay parties except the PCI. A return to a government formula that would include the Socialists and not the Communists has up until now been opposed by the Socialists who do not like the prospect of losing even more votes to the Communists, who would most likely be reinfored by their return to the opposition.

3) a DC government of technicians composed of ministers who are not necessarily party members, but who enjoy the

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confidence of all the parties. A solution favored by the smaller parties, but opposed by the Communists since it seems to carry an anti-Communist prejudice (ministers of other parties are acceptable, but not Communist ministers).

The latter is in the end the most probable and perhaps the Communist opposition would be overcome if all the ministers were not party members and not just those chosen by the Communists.

The negotiations will be, however, long and arduous. All the parties of the former majority have voiced their opposition to anticipated elections and their willingness to find an alternative solution. The smaller parties in particular fear an election would mean a further polarization of the country—and a subsequent elimination of themselves.

Certain elements, particularly within the Christian Democrats, will be pushing for the ballot box solution. Some have never been happy with any form of collaboration with the Communists. Groups like the "Gruppo di cento" that attempted to block the efforts of Aldo Moro towards a compromise solution just prior to his kidnapping are bound to reappear. Even within the PCI there are leaders —some say led by Berlinguer himself—that believe an election rather than any further compromising is preferable.

An eventual resort to elections may not substantially change the situation, however. Although recent polls have indicated that the Communists risk to lose heavily and the Christian Democrats to gain, these polls did not, of course, take into consideration the effect this crisis may have on the electorate. A Communist party that has shown its teeth and refused further compromise with the DC may be in an attractive electoral position. The Christian Democrats, on the other hand, may emerge looking like an intransigent partner.

Elections in the end would be merely putting off the real question facing Italy since the 1976 elections: how to govern the country without the direct or indirect approval of the Communist party which represents an impressive one-third of the nation. Italy has faced dozens of political crises before (since 1963 the country has had one day without a government for every eight days with one), but since June 1976 it has not been the same ball game.

In the past the cabinet crises were often provoked by Christian Democratic infighting and the result was not a substantial shift in policy, but merely a substitution of one DC leader for another. After the 1976 elections, the DC could not simply shift from one ally to another. For the first time since the war, the Christian Democrats found themselves in a position of weakness: a DC government was forced to rely on the direct or indirect support of the Communists.

The 1976 elections represented a watershed in Italian politics. The first government formed after June 1976 was made possible by a Communist abstention. The second Andreotti government enjoyed the direct support of the country's second largest party. If a third government is to be formed before resorting to anticipated elections, the Communists will have to be directly (or indirectly in the form of technicians) involved in the government. "Italy cannot be governed by pushing the Communist Party into opposition," admitted DC deputy Guido Bodrato, "just as Italy cannot be governed without the DC."

MARGO HAMMOND

(Margo Hammond, a frequent contributor, is an American journalist based in Rome.)

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

HISTORY HOME TO ROOST

MONTEZUMA'S REAL REVENGE?

PREJUDICE is a word which has gone out of fashion. The word "discrimination" in its secondary or legal sense—"to make a difference in treatment or favor on a basis other than individual merit"—has taken its place. Such discrimination can be legislated against. It is impossible to outlaw prejudice. It is perhaps possible to root it out by a long and painful process of uncovering it, examining it, educating against it. We began that process a few decades ago, but more or less abandoned it in the heady era of confrontation politics.

It seems to me that we must begin to examine it once again, if only because so many of our present economic dangers are rooted in our various prejudices—prejudices in the simple sense of judgments made on the basis of unwarranted assumptions, unjust grounds, or insufficient knowledge. All three are apt to be at play in our reaction to Mexico's response to our need to reduce our dependence on Middle Eastern oil. Most Americans are faintly aggrieved. Here we are, only weeks—perhaps days away—from drastic changes in our lives caused by the lapse in the flow from Iran—and Mexico is treating us like any other customer, negotiating for its needs in return for filling ours. Outrageous!

The danger is that, as our situation tightens, the already somewhat irrational reaction to the problem of illegal aliens will be exacerbated no matter what the government does to regularize their entry and status. As always, the ones to suffer will be the poor and helpless among them and our own Chicano population.

In the first place we should not have been surprised at, or have seen in President Lopez Portillo's demands anything new. When he was our national guest in the euphoric first days of the Carter administration he was pleasant and hopeful for better relations between our two countries (and accepted with equanimity such strange new departures in state hospitality as the President's book-reading ten-year-old beside him at the official

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dinner!). But he was unequivocal in his speech to the National Press Club . . . and forceful, so much so that I remember wondering at the time at the rather sparse reports on his speech. The flow northward was irresistible, he told us, caused by a dire poverty and unemployment which could only be alleviated by giving Mexico an equal chance in world markets, and by eliminating trade barriers. The United States had to think of the causes of illegal immigration as well as its control. It is certain that he viewed President Carter's subsequent recommendation of criminal sanctions for employers of illegal aliens as a rebuff. That was added to the rebuff in our rejection of the purchase of Mexican natural gas by Secretary Schlesinger—a purchase for which President Lopez seems to have some reason to feel he had been given assurances. At the very least there have been failures in communication based on the assumption—the false assumption—that Mexico had no options.

Secondly, we are probably very much the authors of our own plight in regard to Mexican oil. We know that President Cardenas nationalized the oil companies. But we have forgotten the precipitating factor—the rejection by British and American oil companies of the Mexican Supreme Court order to pay higher wages to Mexican workers. If it had not been for that decision and the subsequent withdrawal of technology, we can only speculate as to how much earlier the Mexican oil discovery might have come, and how very different the whole world's energy picture might have been.

But the assumption was that Mexico was destined to be forever a client nation, a dependent naton, a suitor of the more advanced and powerful nations. Who could have foreseen a Mexico atop a sea of oil with the oil technologists of the whole world suing for her favor? One has the uneasy feeling that the prejudgment was based on the older assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority—a prejudgment so ingrained in our thinking (whether we are Anglo-Saxon by heritage or assimilation) that many Americans have had trouble accepting the powers of a Latin government as truly legitimate.

Last of all, most of us are woefully ignorant—"without sufficient knowledge"—of the history of our relations with Mexico or don't realize that a great chunk of our land—the greater part of the Southwest—was wrested from it in conquests less than glorious. The subject is barely treated in our history texts. But the Mexicans remember as our own Southerners remember the Civil War. The vanquished have long memories.

It certainly should not have been, but it was a surprise to me when I was first in Mexico in 1960 to see a map of Old Mexico which included what is now California, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah—even parts of Wyoming and Kansas. (Although great tracts of that was unsettled land, to be sure, another great part had two-hundred-year-old Mexican towns, villages, missions, and ranches at the time of what is euphemistically called our acquisition.) And I was puzzled by the polite vagueness of our official hostesses when questioned about a war memorial. "Oh, it was because of an old battle, you know, a long time ago," said one diplomatically. I had never heard then of the "boy heroes" of Chapultepec, the military cadets who were the last defenders of Mexico City when General Scott and his invading troops came marching in. It was in their honor that the memorial had been raised—and a measure of Mexico's rising independence toward us that it ever had been—added American residents indignantly the next day.

It is a tangle of all these things that complicate our relations with Mexico today. But nothing is more hurtful to our consciences and more sore to the touch than the complicity of agribusiness—and of small growers, too—in the importation of illegal immigrants to do work Americans will not do—or will not do under those conditions and for that pay. And the complicity of the rest of us in neglecting them in their misery. Add to that the long and brutal discrimination against our Spanish-speaking which dates back to the Mexican war and you have a snarled knot wrought of prejudice and greed at which we must pick away.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

Of several minds: *Frank Getlein*

DIS-ORIENT EXPRESS

NO FURY LIKE A NATION REFORMED

STRANGE times. Curious views. The Chinese vice-premier came over, got the Class A tour, what passes as haute cuisine at the White House, a ten-gallon hat for a five-gallon head, Disneyland-Space in Texas, the works. And all the little ingrate could think to do was to bedevil the dread Soviet shadow hanging over the world, urge the formation of a defensive alliance against the Soviet menace, what might be called "encirclement," and the springing to arms everywhere of anti-Soviet folk. Fair enough, reasonable enough, when you consider what the Chinese have on their northern border and what the United States has been preaching for lo, these forty years and more.

Nope. You're quite wrong. The United States has been preaching nothing of the sort. The United States is appalled at the vice-premier's using his American platform to rail against the good Soviet future allies of the United States in the sacred cause of "disarmament," as it is mysteriously called. Good grief, said government flacks and press pundits, What's the matter with the man? Doesn't he know that everything is coming up roses with the two superpowers? That any minute now we'll have a disarmament agreement guaranteed to allow both parties to break all existing records for arms expenditures, bankrupt both economies and threaten the entire world, not just most of it, with instant destruction if anything goes wrong? As that pundit Freud might well have said, What

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do the Chinese *want*?

What indeed? There was worse to come.

While the ten-gallon hats and the midi-haute cooking were still going on, the Vietnamese, those old rascals, began moving into Cambodia, as we used to call it when we were moving into it. No sooner had the vice-premier got back to the Celestial Kingdom than the Celestials began moving into Vietnam—strictly speaking "North" Vietnam, as we used to call it.

The State Department instantly issued a statement saying that it is the policy of the United States, a) that nobody should invade Cambodia and that b) also nobody should invade Vietnam.

On the face of it, that seems reasonable enough. Nobody should invade anybody in the best of all possible worlds. If this sort of thing catches on, someone might invade us, for heaven's sake.

Still and all, you could pardon a Vietnamese official for being confused about American policy on outside countries invading Cambodia. The last time anybody looked, the United States was invading Cambodia like crazy. U.S. troops were all over a part of the country called "The Parrot's Beak" looking for what was thought to be the Pentagon of the Viet Cong, an insurgent organization which, according to highly paid American thinkers in press and public life, would assuredly cross the Pacific and land in Santa Barbara as soon as they got a boat unless they were destroyed in Cambodia.

And, still and all, you could pardon a Chinese official for thinking that not only was it O.K. to invade Vietnam but that this act would earn the invaders the highest accolade of the United States—Congressional Medals of Honor all round—for carrying on against the threat of self-determination posed by the North Vietnamese when they were fighting against the native French effort to free Vietnam from the Vietnamese and the later, related, American effort to free Vietnam from the Vietnamese. Things do get confusing. And amusing.

What it all means is anyone's guess. It seems to mean that the U.S. has reversed its policy. Whereas we used to believe the thing to do was to invade Southeast Asia with regularity and rigor, we now think this is a rotten thing to do. Fair enough. No one wants to be a hobgoblin of consistency. There is something to be said for admitting a flop is a flop in foreign policy as in show biz. In show biz, they put up the closing notice Saturday night. Somehow, in foreign policy it takes forever.

If—and, granted the relatively realistic biases of most theatrical producers, it's a big if—IF some Broadway producer had been conned into putting on the production of American Foreign Policy as it has been for the last thirty years, he would have closed the show in Philadelphia. The reviews would have been hopeless. There was just something impossible in the second act. No eleven o'clock number. For that matter, no eleven o'clock.

Strange times. Curious views. The fabled Middle East. Suddenly the dread Iranians wanted to seize control of Iran. Again, what's the matter with them? Don't they know Iran is too important to be left in the hands of the Iranians? And that's why we took it over from the Iranians—and the legal government of Mossadegh—all those years ago? And gave it to the good, anti-Iranian Shah? In the tutelage of the CIA?

Some days you can't count on anything—or anybody.

For instance, in the wake of impudent rising of Iranians to take control of Iran, Henry Kissinger, the well-known television entertainer, did a stand-up number saying that he certainly hoped the United States would "learn the lesson of Iran."

Well, all men of good will must hope the United States will learn the lesson of Iran, but there may well be a difference between what the television personality thinks the lesson of Iran is and what men of good will think it is. The performer wasn't all that clear, but judging from his record as the all-time biggest bomber in the history of the world, it is not unreasonable to assume that he meant bombs. The lesson of Iran for Kissinger, future Senator of New York, Connecticut or some other lucky state, is that we should have bombed them. More. If they don't like being tortured, killed, imprisoned, all that good CIA stuff, then you bomb them and bomb them and bomb them, and—as in Vietnam—they throw in the towel, surrender to the free world and let the good French back in to cut the crap game of rubber, rice, reproduction, what you will. *C'est la vie*, as those apostles of *civilisation* used to say.

Strange times. Curious views. The United States in fact has been repudiating the official positions of the United States on all the issues noted above, but doing it without admitting it and that is not necessarily a good thing. It is just possible that in repudiating policy, as in being born again, you are a big step ahead if you can bring yourself to admit that you were wrong, dead wrong, as you sped along, before the big revelation. Back to show biz: the reformed character has to be reformed against the background of total depravity or some reasonable approximation thereto, or there isn't any dramatic reversal. No action. No, in a word, play.

So here. For the Carterites to call with shock and horror upon the Chinese not to invade Vietnam, upon the Vietnamese not to invade Cambodia, without in the least acknowledging that the United States in fact invaded both those countries in quite recent times, lends a curious air of Surrealism, even Dadaism, to a scene which savants like Hodding Carter the Third like to think of as the Field of the Cloth of Gold Up To Date.

Tobacco pushers here are fond of expressing indignation at what they call the hypocrisy of Joseph Califano, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Their case is that Califano goes around denouncing the sotweed and issuing chilling warnings to those who smoke it, but for years he himself was getting through several packs a day and presumably being fairly restrained in denunciation. Then he kicked the habit and now can't get the rest of the country to drop the weed fast enough. (Though it is always worth remembering Califano staunchly defends the folk custom of the government's paying the growers to grow the stuff in the first place.)

Anyway, it is clear that the government as a whole is following Califano's example in many areas, many of them more important. Strange times. Curious views.

FRANK GETLEIN

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CULTS & CHARISMATIC FIGURES

Into the secular void

JOHN E. SMITH

THE BIZARRE, but all too tragic, dissolution of the People's Temple in Guyana leads us to reflect soberly on some perennial human concerns—the orientation of our lives, the loyalties to which we are committed, and the values that determine our decisions and actions. In an increasingly secularized society, there has been a growing tendency to avoid these issues and to bury them under more immediate concerns that are ultimately less important. The tragedy in Guyana cannot be undone, but it can be lessened in force if we can come to a realistic understanding of some factors responsible for the tragedy, and see their bearing on our present situation.

To begin with, a society with a robust but simple faith in the sufficiency of information, computers and technology must ultimately find itself incapable of understanding the religious concern in human experience. That concern seeks for an underlying purpose in life, a sustaining power, a cause, a goal drawing men out of their self-centered enclosures and eliciting from them a supreme devotion. Our extensive knowledge of the history of the world religions makes clear that the religious concern forms a permanent part of the structure of human life. This truth, however, has been obscured for many people by the survival of a false philosophy of history according to which the human race is supposed to pass necessarily through three successive stages—the religious, the metaphysical and the positive or scientific. On this view, man has always been motivated by one aim—to secure his life in a precarious world by devices and techniques designed to overcome the obstacles presented by nature and human history. Accordingly, religion and philosophy are made to appear as mere instruments for achieving the desired goal and, while philosophy is supposed to be more "rational" than religion, both in the end are seen as quite ineffectual in comparison with the third and final stage which is applied science.

Such a view utterly fails to comprehend either religion or philosophy; it commits the additional error of supposing that the concerns they represent have been superseded and will eventually disappear. But neither religion nor philosophy can be reduced to "primitive" attempts at controlling human destiny. The truth is that the different aims and motives of science, religion and philosophy are rooted firmly in the human situation, and it makes no sense to think of them as superseding each other in the name of "progress." The three exist contemporaneously at different levels of development in *every* historical period. Whoever fails to grasp this point will become enmeshed in at least two errors. First, he will misunderstand the peculiar nature of religious or quasi-religious belief and will thus be prevented from making any relevant judgment concerning the role, the appeal and the activities of such figures as the Rev. Mr. Jones. Secondly, if he considers the matter at all, he will invariably suppose that there must be some "scientific" test or standard whereby would-be followers of a charismatic figure can determine whether he is genuine or not.

The belief that the religious concern has been superseded has been a major factor in bringing about a secular void, void because the idols of individualistic narcissism, moral insensitivity and the twin gospels of greed and success are totally inadequate foundations for any lasting human fulfillment. This void is dangerous because in times of despair and frustration those sensitive enough to recognize the void for what it is are most vulnerable in the face of the magnetic leader who promises a deliverance he cannot fulfill. The demonic fills the void. But, again, there can be no understanding of the power and appeal of the charismatic leader if there is no appreciation of the sort of concern to which he speaks. He does not come asking people to believe in some *information* of the sort to be verified with the aid of an encyclopedia. Far from it, he comes with an *inspiration* and a promise to deliver his followers from the emptiness of a life governed by the struggle for wealth and power.

If the religious concern is not fulfilled in a way that involves love, responsibility, honesty and courage, there is the constant peril that it will fall prey to the demonic would-be messiah.

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The task, therefore, of "testing the spirits," of finding some marks of authenticity, is inescapable. The problem is difficult to resolve, and it has not been made easier by the shrinking of the sphere of rationality to the point where the expressions of our most intimate human concerns are regarded as merely "emotional" if not meaningless. Those who so constrict reason believe they are striking a blow for rationality and against superstition. This is an error; the more reason is constricted, the more human experience is forced *outside* the domain of rational criticism and given over to the wayward power of caprice and rhetoric.

THERE IS no litmus-paper test to be applied to the promises of the would-be messiah, but from this it does not follow that there are no critical standards at all. The history of both Judaism and Christianity is filled with the concern to distinguish the true prophet from the false, the sincere man of faith from the hypocrite. Jonathan Edwards, for example, wrote *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections* in which he offered twelve criteria for distinguishing genuine from counterfeit piety. Concern for authenticity arises within the religious communities themselves; it does not originate with the secular critic whose interest in religion is extrinsic.

Religious insight and some centuries of experience provide us with at least three touchstones for appraising religious claims. First, the charismatic figure must not make an absolute claim for himself, but must point beyond himself to the reality in whose "Name" he comes. Jesus emptied his will in obedience to the Father, and answered his contemporaries by saying, "Why callest thou me good? Only one is good, even God." Secondly, the charismatic figure must not exempt himself from the ethic or regimen imposed on the followers, nor should he ever come to believe that he actually possesses all the power and virtue which his followers bestow upon him in their fanatic devotion. Thirdly, he must not solicit money or property that are not put to visible work for human welfare, but remain instead at the personal and largely secret disposal of the leader. It is doubtful that the Rev. Mr. Jones passed any of these tests.

There is, however, a mitigating circumstance which must be taken into account in any appraisal of cults in America. I refer to the powerful strain of Millennialism rooted in American Puritanism, and enhanced by what has been called "muscular" Christianity or the determined effort to plant the "Kingdom of God" on earth. This ideal has received much support from both ends of the theological spectrum. Fundamentalists of various stripes have espoused it, and their antagonists, or "modernists," under the aegis of the "Social Gospel," likewise believed in taking religion down from the clouds and building the Kingdom on earth. The People's Temple quite obviously belongs in this tradition, a fact which helps to explain the search for a special place, a new Eden, where, so to speak, man can start over again in an atmosphere of love and devotion, uncorrupted by the sins of capitalistic society and beyond the threat of the secular void. Unhappily, the entire outlook represents a misreading of the Christian story. The Kingdom is certainly *for* this world as the transforming power of the leaven in the lump, but it is not *of* this world in the sense of constituting a political or socio-economic order.

The tragedy of Guyana should serve as a mirror in which we can discern the shape of our own failure in turning away from the religious resources that have sustained us and thus thereby creating a secular void so readily filled by the demonic.

Jessica Powers

Wanderer

(From the 'Scivias' of St. Hildegarde)

Where did I dwell? I dwelt in the shadow of death,
as did a mystic anciently aver.
Where did I walk? I walked on the primitive
pathway of error, was a child of earth
(and down the years my speech betrayed my birth).
What did I hold for ease against my breast?
The flimsy comfort of a wanderer
for whom there is no rest.

Two children vied for life in me: I fed
the greedy one whose talent was to beg
(no one had warned me of the cowbird's egg).
I let the little one grow thin and pale
and put a blame on life that she was frail.

How did I ever come then to the light?
How did I ever, blind with self, discover
the small strict pathway to this shining place,
I who betrayed the truth over and over
and let a tangle of dark woods surround me?
Simple the answer lies: down cliffs of pain,
through swamp and desert, thicket and terrain,
oh, someone came and found me.

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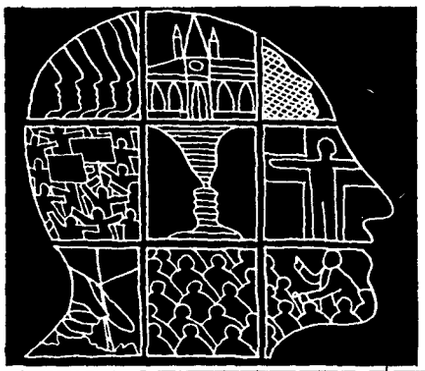

AFTER THE POPE WENT HOME

A Puebla diary

HARVEY COX

THURSDAY, February 1. I arrive in Mexico on the day the Pope leaves. My friends in Cambridge were puzzled. They think that whatever was happening down there is over. The Mexican friends who meet my daughter Sarah and me at the airport know better. Now maybe the real work of CELAM can begin.

Both Mexico City and Puebla (an easy two-hour drive from the capital) are still festooned with smiling pictures of El Papa, some of them torn or drooping. A holiday spirit lingers, but there is much discussion of what the pope's visit meant for the ordinary people. The Dominican theologian Miguel Concha asks do they want the church to be more "visible" than it has been in a Mexico where it remains illegal for clerics to appear in public in religious garb? (This rule by the way was flamboyantly violated by the pope throughout his visit, though few people seemed particularly bothered.) Or, asks Concha, do people see in the pope some hope, however vaguely articulated, that the Gospel can mean a better life than the poverty and debt in which so many of them live? Or was it merely a media event? Or worse, a kind of atavistic religious regression?

Father Concha offers no answers, but for the two days after he leaves, "what did the pope really mean?" is the name of the game. The burden of proof seems to be on the progressives. Was "theology of liberation is a false theory" a mistranslation? Perhaps "the simple joys of the poor" was not as insensitive as it sounded? Was the advice to nuns and priests to avoid political involvement itself a shrewdly political ploy? We shall see.

Friday, February 2. Puebla is warm and sunny, and crawling with stories and rumors. Today, just after the "white" pope's departure, Father Pedro Arrupe, the "black" pope, superior general of 26,000 Jesuits—many of them in Latin America and up to their ears in liberation theology and politics—says he wants the Society of Jesus to continue making the "changing world reality" its field of operations even though this will bring it constantly into the "line of fire." The rumors have it that Bishop Lopez Trujillo, the general secretary of CELAM and the man most often cast in the role of the heavy by the progressives, did all he could to prevent Arrupe from coming to Puebla. But he is here—and as an official Vatican delegate. Manipulative Lopez Trujillo may be; omnipotent, he is not.

The journalists here outnumber the bishops more than 5-1. Like journalists everywhere, they tend to seize on personalities to symbolize issues. The white pope versus black pope face-off does not really work, however. The liberation theologians—Assman, Guttierez, Del Valle, Sobrino, Vidales—are here in strength, and many press people want them to enter the fray. That would make some good copy. Wisely, however, the liberation theologians are keeping a very low profile and refusing to allow the theological and political issues of Puebla to be reduced to an ecclesiastical shoot-out at the O.K. Corral.

Today I had lunch with two Mexican Protestant theologians who told me they thought the liberation theologians' strategy was very clear-headed. Who could gain anything by taking on the pope? In any case, the most important thing going on here is not liberation theology as such but the profound changes in both society and in the Christian consciousness that together have produced this new theology. Nothing the pope says and nothing CELAM says can alter the massive fact that a poor and exploited people, who are also a people deeply drenched in Catholic Christianity, have begun to arrive at a radical new awareness of the meaning the Gospel of Jesus Christ has for this very specific historical situation.

The point was reiterated, over coffee, by another old friend, a former Dominican who remains one of the keenest observers of Latin American theological developments. The age-old vertical vision of a church which begins somewhere within the Holy Trinity and filters down through popes, bishops and priests eventually to the laity is giving way to a vision of the church in which God lives among the people—with Christ as the focal revelation of God's purpose and the Holy Spirit as the source of hope and energy. In this "de-hierarchicalized" church, the bishops and priests and popes all have special roles to play in a common service. This "ecclesiology," he emphasizes, is not just one theory to compare with others. It arises from the actual experience of hundreds, maybe thousands, of Christian *communidades de base*, grass roots congregations all over Latin America.

The "official" afternoon press conference today reveals yet

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another reason why the liberation theologians have wisely chosen to stay in the background. If bishops inside the CELAM consultations can carry on what needs to be done—and the "progressive" bishops include some of the most articulate and credible churchmen here or anywhere—why engage in public confrontation? Today Monsignor Leonides Proano, the bishop of Riobamba in Ecuador, in a neat reversal of CELAM's theme—"Evangelization in Latin American Today and in the Future"—insisted that it was the poor of this continent who were in fact evangelizing the priests. Later on Monsignor Luis Bambaren, the bishop of Chimpote in Peru, fired off a public salvo against right wing groups that call themselves Christian, against the "hard, crude and almost cruel" strategy of the International Monetary Fund's policy in Peru, and against "international capitalism." What was that the pope advised about staying clear of politics?

Still, so many, many *words*. Although the conference has only started I am already wondering how I, or anyone else, will survive the flood of *"palabras, documents,* y *pronunciamentos"* that is sure to engulf Puebla in the days to come.

Saturday, February 3. Today is Sarah's fifteenth birthday, traditionally a cosmic occasion in Mexico—much more important than turning sixteen. It is usually celebrated with long white dresses and maids of honor. Since we lack the paraphernalia for such a blast, we have to be content with doing a little sight-seeing. Sarah notes that the same disco tunes she left behind in Cambridge—"Y.M.C.A." and "At the Copacabana"—are throbbing out of the restaurants and teenage hangouts here. Why, I wonder, is it so hard for the staunch traditionalists to recognize that what is really tearing up Latin America, disrupting families, undermining cherished values, widening the gulf between rich and poor is *not* Marxism, and certainly not the Catholic left, but consumer capitalism? I am once again confirmed in my opinion, developed over many extended visits here, that the Christian socialists of Latin America are the real "conservatives."

Tonight we gathered a group of friends at the Princessa Restaurant on the Puebla Zocalo to celebrate Sarah's fifteenth *cumpleanas. Enchiladas verdes, huevas rancheras,* cake and coffee. We embarrass her to death by singing "Happy Birthday to You" in full volume. A Mexican lady at the next table sings a few lines of *"Sao Mananitos,"* the traditional birthday song. Another man offers her a lollipop. Sarah is blushing but pleased nonetheless. Glaring at me she says, with a smile, "Okay, just wait 'til your birthday, dad." I can wait.

On Saturday night the Nicaraguans lead a lively open air concert-liturgy in the street using a new setting for the Mass. It is not a Mass since that sort of thing is illegal under the anticlerical Mexican constitution—unless you happen to be the pope. The festive atmosphere is dampened only by a speech the Trappist-poet-insurgent Ernesto Cardenal has just made about the wretched situation in Nicaragua and the courageous battle many Christians are carrying out there against the Samoza dictatorship. As we sing the Credo, *Canto de la communion, Santo* and Gloria, the spirit of hope and dedication lifts everyone. People embrace and smile at strangers. It is going to be very hard, I think, for Samoza or anyone else to repress this fervor. Maybe he should be consulting the Shah's travel agency.

Sunday, February 4. Today all the bishops are supposed to visit local parishes. I monitor the little church of San Pedro in the hamlet of Mexicaltingo near Cholula where we are spending the weekend admist friendly dogs, turkeys, rabbits, chickens and cabbage fields. No bishop appears. Not surprising since there are supposed to be over three hundred churches in and around Cholula, and there are obviously not enough bishops to go round.

A bishop does appear later in the day, however, in the main square of the town of Cholula itself. The master of ceremonies asks everyone for a nice big hand for him. A choir of little girls chirps a song to Our Lady of Guadalupe over a loudspeaker that is turned up twice as loud as necessary. A crowd of boys dressed as Moors races around shouting noisily and everyone continues to devour their chicken and *mole*.

Monday, February 5. Today is a national holiday in Mexico—the Day of the Constitution—and the President is busy assuring everyone that separation of church and state still does obtain in Mexico. The bishops, however, did not take the day off. They went on debating the drafts that will eventually appear in the final document, including sections on the influ-

ence of transnational corporations, the question of industrialization and all the rest. Tonight Gustavo Guttierez will talk in public, at last, about liberation theology. Is the low profile tactic being set aside?

There is little doubt that the real power of the liberation theologians here in Puebla is that they are very bright and very assiduous in reading the draft documents, offering suggestions, working on alternative approaches. Their patience and their skill are remarkable, and the number of bishops who are consulting them has gradually grown from about thirty to around seventy.

Of all these theologian-consultants, the one who has impressed me most so far is Father Xabier Gorositiago of Panama, who is also an accomplished sociologist. He has worked for years on the influence of multinational corporations in Latin America, especially in the "banana republics" of Central America. The picture he paints is not a pretty

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one—multinational giants drawing an ever larger percentage of their profits from Latin America; croplands bought up by the agribusiness colossi to grow luxury foods for export; corporate land-holdings driving millions of unemployed *campesinos* out of the country and into the *favellas* and *barrios* of Caracas and Lima. He explains convincingly why Puebla is different from Medellin. In the past ten years Latin America has been drawn ever more tightly into the network of global corporate power. He shows why there is a direct link between the hunger and misery of the Latin American majority and the decisions made in the board rooms of United States corporations.

At his press conference Guttierez is the patient professor *par excellence*. He answers questions carefully without a trace of bombast. A small man with strongly Indian features he is anything but the cartoon caricature of the bomb-tossing guerrilla priest. I first met him in Peru in 1970. What impressed me most about his theology then—and still does—is his method, and it is this *method*, not its particular content, which I believe is the main contribution of the theology of liberation. Simply put, liberation theology is not an academic enterprise pursued among specialists in which the findings are eventually retailed to the faithful. Rather, the actual experience of the people themselves as they try to live out the Gospel becomes an integral ingredient in the task of theologizing. "Experience" here does *not* mean "*religious* experience" in the special sense of a William James or a Rudolf Otto. It means *human* experience, especially in the sense that what is uniquely human is the capacity of *homo sapiens* to understand, use and alter the world. Guttierez's theology serves as a reminder that much of academic theology today has accepted—often quite uncritically—a modern, quite specialized view of what is "religious" as something cultic or ecstatic.

Tuesday, February 6. The main themes that will eventually appear in the final document are beginning to surface. Puebla has more leaks than a Victorian mansion in a rainstorm. Some of the participants are enraged. Today Father Jose Luis Razo, a vice-president of the Latin American Confederation of Religious (that is the group which brings together the various religious orders), complained that the majority of the bishops were bottled up in an impossibly abstract language that would never really make contact with the earth. "All rhetoric," he said, adding that "the failure of CELAM to come to terms with the plight of the poor will not stop the renovation now going on in the church."

In fact, it seems clear the final document will indeed say something rather strong about repression and will directly criticize the ideology of "national security." On this last point the influence of José Comblin is quite evident. He has been working hard here, and his book on the myth of national security, written in part while he was teaching at Harvard Divinity School three years ago, is widely known here. Liberation theologians apply the pope's statement about "false ideologies," to the national security doctrine, brilliantly reversing the way the phrase is interpreted by the conservatives. A perfectly legitimate interpretation, too, since, as Comblin so devastatingly shows, national security is a doctrine, using ideas such as God, Christian civilization and the rest to legitimate a deformed social order.

The conditions under which the bishops met—a walled and carefully guarded fortress-seminary—did not seem to offer much promise for their being in touch with the outside world.

Tonight I had a late supper with two or three North American reporters who, although they do not understand Spanish, are struggling assiduously and, I think, very sincerely, to grasp what is going on here and report it accurately. It is not easy.

Wednesday, February 7. Skies are cloudy today for the first time since I arrived, but no rain. The leaks from the drafts of the final document, however, have become a deluge. This morning I bumped into John Dart, the religion editor of the *Los Angeles Times* who wrote a very good popular book on the Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi. I told him we were lucky that in dealing with those ancient documents we have only the *final* versions and not all the intermediate versions the way we do here.

It now seems that the condemnation of the doctrine of national security will say that this doctrine ". . . pretends to justify itself, in certain countries of Latin America as the defender of Western and Christian civilization," but that it "develops a repressive system in accordance with its concept of permanent war."

Thursday, February 8. People are getting testy and impatient. Today Father Guillemo Saelman, a Dutchman who is superior of the Augustinians complained, on the front page of *Excelsior*, Mexico City's main daily, that the majority of bishops have adopted a reactionary line and have an exagerrated phobia of Communism.

At the morning press briefing for English-speaking journalists (there is a much larger daily report in Spanish every afternoon), the reporters became edgy when Bishop Hayes of Chicago seemed to be hedging questions about what was happening in the various nuclei and working committees. There are probably too many reporters here, many more than would have come if the pope had not appeared. They are angry not only at what appear to be very guarded press conferences but also at the exclusion of five journalists including two friends of mine, Enrique Maza of Mexico and Gary MacEoin of the U.S.

A lot of people are disturbed over a report in a Mexican newspaper that Carter has ordered greater surveillance of dissident religious groups in Latin America, that he has told the C.I.A. to check especially on radical Catholic movements in Mexico in the interest of avoiding "another Iran." Although we have no way of knowing if the report is accurate—it claims to be a description of testimony before the Senate Foreign

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Relations Committee—44 U.S. citizens here in Puebla signed a letter to Carter objecting to such an intrusion and released it to the press today.

Today I found in my mail box a mimeographed invitation to all the *periodistas* (journalists) to attend a cocktail party this evening at the Palafoxiana Seminary where the well-guarded bishops' sessions are held. I hesitated—I despise cocktail parties—but finally decided to attend. I am glad I did since I ended the evening having a private supper with none other than Bishop Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, archbishop coadjutor of Medellin, Secretary-General of CELAM and the *bête noire* of Puebla. It happened quite naturally. I was standing in the huge reception hall of the seminary, my "*periodista*" name tag and picture on my lapel, being jostled by three hundred people while a mariachi band blared deafeningly. There in the midst of a clump of excited guests stood Bishop Trujillo himself, a tall, heavy shouldered man in his early forties. A CELAM staff person asked if I'd like to meet him and of course I agreed.

As we shook hands and exchanged "*mucho gustos,*" he peered at my name tag and registered surprise.

"Harvey Cox," he said, "a *periodista!*"

I was a bit uncomfortable. Were my journalist's credentials about to be challenged? Would I be cast out to join Enrique Maza and Gary MacEoin in the limbo of the uncredentialed. But no. Bishop Trujillo, it seems, had once read *La Ciudad Secular* and, apart from wondering why a theologian was here in such a flimsy disguise, wanted to discuss theology.

"What about the resurgence of religion all over the world," he wanted to know, or the fact that the monstrous metropoli of Latin America do not seem to be very liberating for anyone?

I took a breath and started to answer, hoping my underdeveloped Spanish would somehow carry the full weight of nuance I wanted to convey. Just as I started, the mariachi band cranked up "Lloroma"; the bishop leaned as close to my ear as he could, but it was no use. Finally he said, "Can you come have supper with me?"

After reading some of our North American neoconservatives, I think I can understand Lopez Trujillo and his hopes for CELAM. An intelligent and thoughtful man—the word "brooding" somehow comes to mind—he is disquieted about the chaos toward which Latin America seems to be heading, and convinced of the need for religion to provide—*again* perhaps?—the fabric of values and meanings any culture needs. He is deeply impressed with the popular piety of this continent (as anyone has to be) and asked me what I made of the clamorous welcome the pope received in officially anticlerical Mexico. I asked him what contribution the church in Latin America could make to the church universal. He answered, a little wistfully it seemed, that it had to be a church of the poor, committed to the poor, but—he added—"only evangelically," which has become a kind of code word here for rejecting any use of class analysis, the theory explaining Latin America's poverty in terms of its economic dependency on the U.S. and the industrialized "North," or anything else that smacks of Marxist methodology in understanding why the poor in Latin America seem to get poorer and poorer. Bishop Trujillo is *not* a warm person. I do not agree with most of his ideas, hardly any of them. But having supper with him did "demythologize" him a bit.

Friday, February 9. Today the final lineaments of the document are appearing and the different positions represented by various bishops are beginning to be quite evident. There is no question that the document will criticize repressive regimes (without naming countries), support human rights, and declare that the church should have a special commitment to the poor. But the document will also leave many people dissatisfied. Octavio Nicolas Derisi, auxiliary bishop of La Plata in Argentina, complained that the document sounds too much like an economic or social treatise and does not have enough of the "Christian and supernatural aspect." Besides, he continued, it is entirely too "partial" and does not condemn with sufficient clarity "the greatest danger of all which is Marxism."

For the "progressive" minority—mainly represented by the bishops of Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Central America—the document remains too abstract and high-sounding.

It now seems that the document will contain an equal condemnation both of Marxism and of capitalism. This will mean little to anyone, although the condemnation of the "doctrine of national security" may excite more discussion. One paragraph is still sticking in the bishops' collective craw. According to what the *periodistas* refer to as "informed sources," the disputed paragraph reads as follows: "Countries such as ours which in their systems do not respect fundamental human rights—life, health, education, making a living, work—are in a situation of the permanent violation of the dignity of the person."

It goes on to speak of the fear and anxiety that have arisen "because of the abuses of power typical of regimes based on force," and lists such "typical abuses of power" as repression, violation of privacy, disproportionate bail, torture, exile, and detention without judicial review.

These are strong words, even though no particular countries are named. In fact the words were too strong for 69 bishops who voted against the paragraph and 42 who voted "juxtamodum" (72 voted for). It will be interesting to see how the final wording and the final votes come out. The rest of this section hews closely to the tradition of the social encyclicals. It decries the way some Latin American governments discourage genuine social participation and repress labor unions and peasants' organizations. It condemns, as "the most devastating and humiliating violation of the human person," the poverty "in which millions of Latin Americans live." This poverty, it adds, is not merely transitional but is the result of systematic structures which must be changed if the sickness, infant mortality, hunger, unemployment and malnutrition are to be dealt with. Not bad.

Saturday, February 10. Puebla is so full of people it can get exhausting. Towering Bishop Marcos McGrath of Panama, undoubtedly one of the best scholar-theologians among the bishops, chats with me about the bibliography I am using in my

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current teaching; he suggests a few additional books. Diminutive Helder Camara, archbishop of Recife and Olinda, seems preoccupied, not exuding his usual vivaciousness. Of all the many theologians present the one I find most engaging is Jon Sobrino, S.J., of El Salvador. At the hotel where he is staying, the journalists and theologians have coopted one room as a lounge and snack area. There is coffee, milk, rolls, fruit juice and a whole box full of separately wrapped little pellets of Enterovioform, the world's best instant remedy for diarrhea. It's nice to know that other Latin Americans, not just gringos, suffer from Montezuma's revenge.

Father Sobrino, best known for his excellent writings on Christology, speaks fluent English, also German. Sobrino wants to know what is happening in theology in the U.S. He is suspicious of psychologized "pastoral theology" and of the widespread new interest in comparative religion which may become a diversion from the demanding task of following Jesus as an "epistomological starting point," that is as a way not just to "apply the faith" but to *grasp* it.

At 11 p.m. Sobrino excuses himself in order to go confer with a couple of bishops.

Sunday, February 11. I am beginning to think I was hasty in my remarks last week about the pope's speeches. Gustavo Guttierez insists that when you read them carefully and in context they are really quite supportive of what the "*comunidades de base*" and the committed Christians here are doing. He agrees that the church *as church* should normally stay out of politics (it usually is on the wrong side anyway), and believes the pope learned a lot in his visit since his speeches got better as he went along.

Monday, February 12. The "Message to the People of Latin America" came out officially tonight, and the full document will probably appear tomorrow, although it will not become official, of course, until it is approved by the pope.

Puebla, clearly, is not an isolated event. In one sense it began with the conservative reaction that set in right after Medellin and with the election of Lopez Trujillo as general secretary of CELAM in 1972. The Puebla story gathered momentum as the new general secretary and his supporters tried—often in heavy-handed ways—to exclude the progressive bishops from CELAM III and to make sure that absolutely no liberation theologians would be invited. The story took a dramatic turn when the appearance of the "preparatory document" touched off a world-wide debate, one of the most important, perhaps, in the modern history of Roman Catholic thought. The decision of the new pope to make CELAM III his first trip outside Italy captured the attention of the entire world. It is scarcely too much to say that, with the exception of Vatican II, Puebla has been the most widely covered, hotly contested and symbolically important conciliar event in the annals of Christianity.

Clearly many bishops, though not a majority, came here determined to slow down the spread of grass roots Christian communities, to condemn liberation theology as a dangerous distortion and to reimpose their control on a church that seemed to be getting out of hand. Others obviously came with different ideas. But the basic question soon became how much the bishops would respond to an idea and seek to guide the people who actually make up their church and therefore their continent, and how much this new, massive theology would be excluded or ignored in a blather of pronouncements or condemnations. The conditions under which the bishops met—a walled and carefully guarded fortress-seminary—did not seem to offer much promise for their being in touch with the outside world. But there have been other people in Puebla too: Argentine mothers of "disappeared people," more than a hundred hard-working members of religious orders, a score of liberation theologians, several competent social scientists, an articulate group of Latin American feminists, and—most importantly—hundreds of Christians fresh from grass-roots congregations and the bloody streets of Nicaragua and El Salvador. As the days went by these "two Pueblas" began to interact. The final document will reflect not only the debate among the bishops themselves but also the fact that not even towering walls and armed security forces can hold the world at bay indefinitely. The church, not just the bishops, has met at Puebla.

Monday, February 26. Two weeks later. What about the final document itself? The first thing to say is that it not only *ratified* Medellin, at points it goes far beyond. It speaks openly of the "persecution and oppression" of the Latin American people. It sees the increase in poverty as the result of the advance of international capitalism. By quoting Pope John Paul II, who said that the poor are getting poorer *because of* the rich, a link is established which goes beyond the traditional social teachings of the church. True, like all such documents, the Puebla one is clearly a product of tough negotiations. The result is a mixture resembling what one Cuban Carmelite called a "blue-eyed mulatto." But this unevenness honestly reflects, rather than masks, the present position of the church in Latin America. It gives everyone living space, it accepts a radical theological pluralism and is replete with quotable phrases. Nearly all twenty-one sections have three parts—an analysis of the situation, a review of pastoral criteria, and then a listing of options for action. Some of these sections—especially those on the Latin American reality, on the base communities, and on the church's special commitment to the poor—are powerful. Far from condemning the base communities, for example, the document warmly endorses them. Other sections, however, like the one on Christology and ecumenism, are pathetically weak. All in all the document reveals a divided but lively and courageous church, prepared to live with the struggle that is now raging within it and around it, determined to be on the side of the poor and unwilling to exclude movements or ideas considered dangerous in the corridors of ecclesial and political power. Something very important for the church and for the whole world happened at Puebla. I am glad to have been there while it was happening.

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Screen

MALE OF THE SPECIES

WIFEMISTRESS, MOTHERWHORE

ALFRED Hitchcock used to say that he put icy blondes in his films because behind that cold exterior, they were the most erotic of all women. A nice fantasy. A lot a current films about the women of the past, especially Victorian women, make a similar assumption. It was the bourgeois women in the most repressive, prudish societies who, this current wisdom goes, were most gloriously over-sexed. The popularity of this notion even inspired a producer of porn to take a shot at legit audiences a few years ago with an adaptation of the underground Victorian classic, *The Flea*. *Wifemistress*, a new film from Italy by director Marco Vicario, is the latest addition to this genre.

It's about a woman (Laura Antonnelli) in a small town in Italy around the turn of the century who is so repressed that she is a hypochondriac unable to leave her bed. She relinquishes the administration of her estates to her husband (Marcello Mastroianni), who spends most of his time away from home touring the province on business. But when he is falsely accused of murder and has to go into hiding even from her, she bestirs herself. She leaves her bed and takes up the family business obligations. Making his rounds of the province, she also discovers that he had a mistress at every stop. This is the beginning of her own sexual education. Finding his pornography collection, she tries masturbation. Next she tries a one-night stand with a soldier, and then a long-range relationship with a young doctor. She even sleeps with a couple of her husband's old mistresses. And in the end, having discovered that her husband is hiding within view of their home, she brings the doctor there so that her husband will have to watch them together. Afterwards, she sends the doctor away forever and stands defiantly in the bedroom window where her husband can see her. "Now we're equal," she says softly, knowing that even though he can't hear her, he gets the message.

We get the message, too. It is that *Wifemistress* has been a movie about—surprise!—women's liberation. This is another nice fantasy, just like Hitchcock's blondes. It turns out that a Victorian wife with a secret life was really a forerunner of the liberated woman. Who'd have thunk it? First *Wifemistress* recreates the past in the image of the present, as a society of swingers, and then it suggests that such a society is what equality of the sexes is really all about. It's the old one-two punch. On the one hand, the wifemistress can play a role in the same wet dream where the icy blonde is a star. She's just a new variation on the old theme of the mother/whore. But on the other hand, she's also some kind of closet feminist. this is the sort of thinking that fakes the women's movement right out of its socks. Certain ideas which men have about women seem to be as tenacious as one of those strains of potato bug that proves itself impervious to every new DDT developed. No matter how toxic the chemicals, this little bug finds a way to adapt, survive, and even thrive on them. That's what *Wifemistress* does. It turns liberation into mere libertinism.

At the point when the women's movement finally tells men to screw off, a movie life *Wifemistress* will still have the last word: "I love it when you talk dirty." At the end of the film, when the wifemistress drives from her bed the young doctor whom she has seduced and made to fall in love with her, what she becomes is a *belle dame sans merci*. That's what being "equal" really means here. Now that Vicario's heroine has behaved as badly as her husband did, she is ready to take him back, and he is ready to come back. The truth is that they deserve each other. His demeanor as he approaches the house is contrite. he shuffles forward, a broken man—a man who has finally met his match, his "equal," in a woman. But don't I detect a subtle glint in his eye which suggests that he's not as defeated as he seems? I suspect that he is actually a familiar figure, the male submissive who approaches his dominatrix and anticipates the customary mock humiliation.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Stage

TENNESSEE'S WALTZ

FAMILIAR WILLIAMS THEMES

THE FINAL IMAGE in *The Glass Menagerie* is that of Laura, alone, illuminated by the candles which, for all that they are the Gentleman Caller's "favorite kind of light," will bring no warmth to the girl. Tom finishes his last speech; Laura blows out the candles; the play ends in darkness. The quiet, almost sentimental quality of that final speech, of the play as a whole, masks the fact that *Menagerie* ends with the starkest picture of loneliness in the Williams canon. The heroines who follow tend to have more Amanda than Laura in them. The specter of separateness haunts them too, but, whether lyric victims or comic grotesques, beset by violence or desperation or plain indifference, they manage a kind of vitality which insists that they try to escape, to outsmart, to smother the loneliness that Williams sees as central to the human condition.

Now, almost thirty-five years after Laura's disappearance into darkness, Williams is back with a quartet of women coping with or succumbing to the perennial Williams problem. *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur*, which was first performed at the Spoleto Festival USA last year, is in a showcase production at the Hudson Guild, presumably—like its characters—looking for a more permanent home. The *Creve Coeur* of the title is not simply the heartbreak of Dorothea, the leading character but an amusement park to which her roommate, Bodey, regularly goes with her twin brother for Sunday picnics. Williams has always been partial to that kind of playful

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serious title *(A Streetcar Named Desire, Camino Real)*, and what little plot the play has carries Dorothea beyond her *crève-coeur* to the amusement park, to an acceptance of life in which one settles for what one can get instead of what one wants. Dorothea is a school teacher (civics), a foolish, pretty blonde woman, running to plumpness and shortness of breath, who expects a romantic marriage to the handsome, socially prominent principal of the school where she teaches and who finally, this lovely Sunday, learns that her dream man has become engaged to a girl in what a 1930s comedy (the play takes place in 1935) would have called "his own set." She pulls herself together and goes off to join the picnic, to acquiesce in the courtship that Bodey has been engineering with her fat, cigar-smoking, beer-drinking St. Louis German brother, the antithesis of the now inaccessible principal. Before she goes, she stops long enough to quiet the hysterical German girl from upstairs, to give her coffee and crullers and compassion, to recognize—as she has refused to do before—that the girl's fear of being alone in the apartment where her mother died is only an extension of what all the characters feel.

Both Bodey and Helena, the schoolteacher who expects Dorothea to share an apartment, want to use her—not quite as the principal did, on the reclining seat of his brand-new Reo touring car—as a defense against loneliness. Bodey, who knows that she will never have children of her own, envisions a marriage which will make her an aunt, give her a surrogate family which might bring meaning to her preoccupation with the kitchen. Helena, who somehow confuses the history of art with tea sandwiches and contract bridge, needs Dorothea financially (to pay for the expensive apartment she covets), but her brief soliloquy on eating alone indicates that Dorothea's presence is as important as her money. Both Bodey's blowzy cheerfulness and Helena's thin-lipped bitchiness (she has most of the good lines) are forms of desperation, but Dorothea's decision to ally herself with Bodey suggests that warm vulgarity is more desirable than waspish correctness although even that warmth is cold comfort.

Familiar Williams theme then, relentlessly explicit, and characters that bring echoes of so many Williams women who have gone before, but how are we to take the play? Shirley Knight does Dorothea in a voice that suggests Marie Wilson as much as the traditional Southern belle—a comic voice, one might assume, had Knight not used a similar one when she played Blanche a few seasons ago in Princeton and Philadelphia in a production that wrecked the rhythm of *Streetcar*. She manages to get through the voice to the character by the end of the play, but Peg Murray (as Bodey) and Charlotte Moore (as Helena) are never more than the vaudeville antagonists Williams has written and Jane Lowry's suicidal Miss Gluck is a travesty character as well as an unlikely Miss Happiness. Add that each act opens with a tinny victrola grinding out "Alone" and that the lines are so full of the names of products, places, people that they seem a parody of Blanche DuBois's fondness for the specific.

Perhaps a comic variation on the familiar Williams theme is intended (remember *Slapstick Tragedy)*, but the mention of Blanche in this context is a reminder that Williams has always used comedy in his serious plays—particularly verbal comedy (think of Amanda on the telephone, Blanche's conjuring "Mr. Edgar Allan Poe" to describe Stella's apartment). The four women in *Creve Coeur* lack the urgency of the early Williams heroines and, contrariwise, the comedy fails to penetrate the surface and set up shop in the viscera of the characters. The problem, I suspect, is that there is an idea rather than dramatic substance at the heart of their speeches—conversation and soliloquy alike—and it takes more than the proclamation of *crève-coeur* to provide a substantial theatrical picnic.

GERALD WEALES

Books: JESUS, GOD'S LIVING PARABLE

JESUS:
AN EXPERIMENT IN CHRISTOLOGY

Edward Schillebeeckx

Seabury, $24.50, 736 pp.

Donald Senior

THE APPEARANCE, in English, of Edward Schillebeeckx's 1975 book on christology can only be described as monumental. Monumental not only because it is massive in size (nearly 800 pages of text and notes) and erudition (over 600 authors are cited), but because a premier systematic theologian of the Roman Catholic tradition has written a genuinely significant study in New Textament exegesis. This latter fact will be the first thing to strike the attentive reader. Schillebeeckx sets out to dialogue with exegetes rather than his fellow theologians, not because he wants to be "unbrotherly" (p.40), but because he considers a critical and competent assessment of the biblical material to be the essential starting point for any revitalized christology. Even though he confesses to being on strange ground in concentrating on biblical studies, he performs his task with awesome skill and comprehension. In fact, I am not aware of any work in modern New Testament christology which can match it. At times, he seems to endorse too wholeheartedly a debatable exegetical position (such as Siegrid Schulz's elaborate hypothesis on the theology of Q or Theodore Weeden's interpretation of Mark). But in a work this size, such borrowings are inevitable. On the whole, Schillebeeckx demonstrates sound discrimination and good judgment.

The book is divided into four major sections, moving from a discussion of

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methodology (Part I), to a detailed study of the historical Jesus (Part II), then to the impact of the history of Jesus on the early community (Part III), and, finally, to the implication of all this for our contemporary world (Part IV).

In Part I, Schillebeeckx reviews the kind of questions that make christology an urgent responsibility of the contemporary church: the challenge of critical sciences, the Jewish-Christian dialogue, interaction with non-Christian religions and with a non-theistic technological world. But basic to all these factors is the key question of salvation: what does salvation in Jesus (the heart of the Christian message) mean in a world where humans look for and experience "salvation" in other ways? Put differently, how can Christians make universal claims for the man Jesus? It is this question, more than the others, that Schillebeeckx will pursue.

Schillebeeckx also uses Part I to reflect on methodology. He notes that the unity amid the diversity of New Testament thought is to be found in the basic thrust of the New Testament community itself: its insistence on defining "the ultimate meaning and purport of their lives by reference to Jesus of Nazareth" (p.56). The term Jesus of *Nazareth* is important, because, unlike Bultmann and other late 19th and early 20th century theologians, Schillebeeckx does not find an unbridgeable chasm between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith. The accumulated results of modern critical exegesis do not lead to agnosticism about the historical dimensions of Jesus. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of Schillebeeckx's work and, in my view, one of its chief strengths. He observes that a significant personage like Jesus leaves an imprint on his contemporaries. That "reflex" on the part of the community becomes a link between Jesus of Nazareth and the post-Easter reflection of the Christian community.

Thus, even though the early community immediately set out to *interpret* the ultimate significance of Jesus (an ongoing task which Schillebeeckx notes is essential if the Christian vision is to be universal rather than local), in each instance this "theologizing" reckoned with at least some aspect of the historical Jesus. Schillebeeckx does not affirm this as a presupposition but as an anticipated conclusion which his painstaking analysis constantly demonstrates. Critical exegesis has provided criteria which enable us to trace the link between the historical person of Jesus and the community's interpretation of him. These criteria (Schillebeeckx merely rephrases the standard criteria of "multiple attestation," "dissimilarity," and "coherence") must be applied cautiously, in tandem, and without the expectation of definitive results.

His methodological caveats aside, Schillebeeckx plunges into Part II, the longest (290 pp.) and most impressive part of his study. Here he discusses why Jesus's life was "gospel" for his followers. Jesus was, in effect, a "living parable of God" (p.159), demonstrating that God is decisively "for us," "mindful of humanity." This "parable" was told in Jesus's own striking intimacy with God, in his provocative story-telling, in his acts of healing and compassion, in his prophetic challenge to wrong priorities, in his calculated table fellowship with the outcasts, and in his willingness to accept even death in service of others. These dimensions of the life of Jesus of Nazareth—dimensions which can be established by critical historical methodology—become the underpinning of post-Easter reflection.

In this section Schillebeeckx also tackles, at least in an initial way, the resurrection traditions. This is an aspect of his study that is surely to cause reaction in the English-speaking world, as his original Dutch version did in Europe. He observes that the crucial issue is what exactly happened between the dispersal of the disciples at the time of Jesus's death and their re-assembly some time later. Neither the empty tomb tradition (which he considers to be the product of traditions associated with early pilgrimages to the tomb in Jerusalem) nor the appearance traditions (which presuppose the reunion of the disciples and reflect the ecclesial and therefore post-Easter reflection of the evangelists) are of much help historically. The best model for understanding what Easter meant for the disciples, Schillebeeckx affirms, is that of "conversion," a Jewish literary genre detectable in several New Testament resurrection accounts. The disciples experience forgiveness and reconciliation and are able to re-group and pick up the pieces of the mission Jesus of Nazareth had given them. Schillebeeckx repeatedly insists that he is not reducing the meaning of the resurrection experience to a memory of the historical Jesus (even though the disciples' memory of the compassion of Jesus prepared them for Easter). Rather, this forgiveness and conversion is an act of God's grace, an experience which enables them to understand that Jesus was the Christ (p.360).

While Schillebeeckx's careful analysis of the Gospel Easter narratives and such Pauline passages as I Corinthians 15 is well done, one has to wonder about the theological proposition he has reduced them to. Only once, as far as I observed, does he refer to the meaning of resurrection for corporeal existence (cf. p.645 he where refers to the "personal-cum-bodily" resurrection of Jesus). He emphasizes that resurrection is an act of God that affects Jesus (and not immediately the disciples), but seems to prefer the language of exaltation when he moves to interpret the meaning of this "act of God." The failure to discuss the significance of resurrection for bodily existence (Jesus's and our own), and its

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relationship to the biblical meaning of creation in general is the most serious flaw in Schillebeeckx's book.

In the third section, Schillebeeckx outlines some of the basic interpretations of Jesus in the New Testament community. The early creeds took a variety of forms (focusing on Jesus as coming Judge at the Parousia, as *Theos Aner* or wonder-working Son of David, as Wisdom, as Crucified and Risen Savior), but all of them spring from a common dominant understanding of Jesus as eschatological prophet. The unique person of Jesus and the early community's Easter experience of salvation in him transformed every traditional category. But the prophetic role best described the impression Jesus of Nazareth made on his contemporaries, and the expectation of a prophetic figure associated with the final dawn of salvation by intertestamental Judaism laid the groundwork for the vigorous theologizing of the Jewish-Christian community.

Schillebeeckx concludes Part III by noting that the dominant feature of the New Testament reflection is a "theology of Jesus," that is, a reflection on how God's salvation is experienced through Jesus. Thus this primary level of reflection is basically "functional" and "salvation-historical" in orientation. But even in the New Testament traditions, a momentum is established toward a secondary level of reflection, a christology as such, which inquires about the identity of Jesus himself. Jesus is seen as "belonging to God," as "wholly on God's side," as "Son of God." These are biblical ways of speaking ontologically.

The last and briefest section of the book steps back from the biblical material and offers a tentative discussion of how the New Testament portrayal of Jesus can have meaning for today. The crucial question is whether an individual human life can have universal significance, a proposition denied by rationalism. Talk about Jesus, for the rationalist mind (which, according to Schillebeeckx, has had a profound impact on contemporary christology, especially in North America), is only a language for describing new religious experiences, not a statement about Jesus

Facts and Faith in American History

William Ames

Technometry

Translated by Lee W. Gibbs

Ames' *technometria* was the official philosophy of the New England Puritans, taught to generations of students at Harvard and Yale. This is the first translation and analysis of a theology that synthesized classical pedagogy, medieval scholasticism, and Renaissance humanism.

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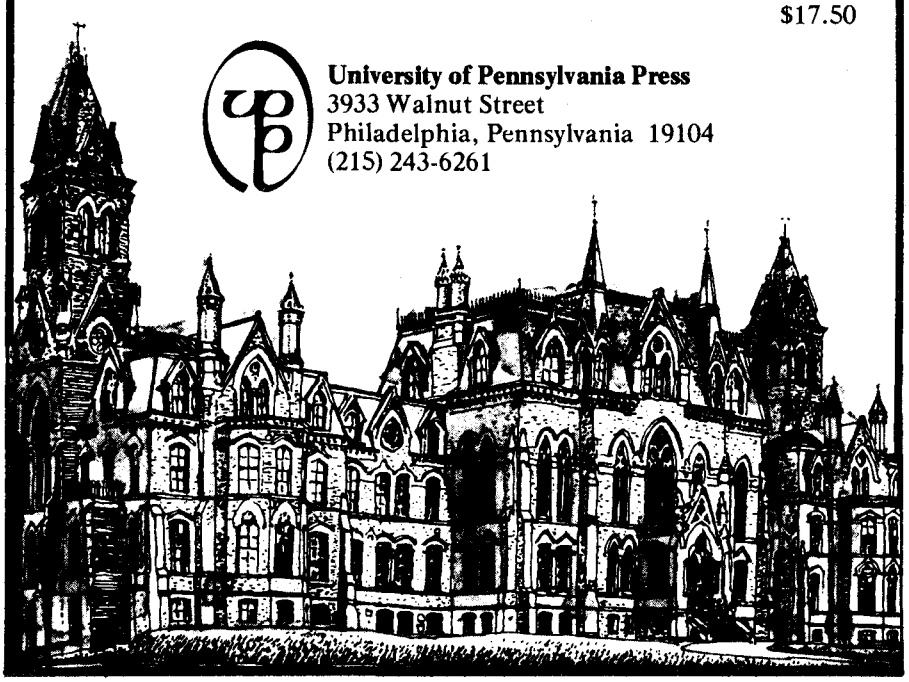

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In the case of this book, such a pastoral goal—even if only partially achieved—is not mere lip service. Some portions of his book are powerful and intensely moving, almost homiletic in tone, and almost every segment of this study contains material which has rich pastoral potential.

Beyond question, this is a book that is a credit to its author and, much more important, a service to its subject.

Many impressions linger from an intelligent and often inspiring book such as this. For one, the theological style of Schillebeeckx's work is significant. In recent years, several major christological studies by Catholics (e.g., Küng, Kasper) have devoted large portions of their attention to the biblical data. Schillebeeckx's book, even though the original Dutch edition predated many of these other efforts, represents the most developed example of this approach. In fact, his concentration on the biblical data is so intense that the book is more of a prologomena to christology than a christology as such. But even at that, Schillebeeckx's achievement is impressive and valuable. Perhaps it is safe to say, that no major christological study in the foreseeable future can afford to be less skillful (even if less voluminous) with the New Testament materials than this work. In a way, theology has returned to a medieval conception in which all legitimate theology was understood to be biblical interpretation.

There is another point that should be noted about the style of this work, and here, too, Schillebeeckx shares a characteristic of several recent christological studies. The author writes his work not only for exegetes and theologians, but wants it to be "within reach of anybody interested" ("Foreword"). But it is doubtful that anyone who does not have some academic background would get far in this book or at least enjoy doing so. Schillebeeckx's efforts to reach the proverbial "general reader" are hampered not only by the technical nature of his exegetical discussions but also by a translation that, at times, is simply laborious. But still it is a hopeful sign of the times that a pastoral goal has become part of the modern theological enterprise. himself. This assumption needs critical challenge. The Christian stand is that God can and does "act" in and through human history. At this point Schillebeeckx returns to an image with which he began his study: Jesus, a human person, is the "parable of God," the one whose human existance was "wholly for God," a God who, in turn, is paradoxically and parabolically revealed through Jesus as "totally for man."

Pyrotechnics without life

WINTERSPELT

Alfred Andersch

Translated by Richard & Clara Winston

Doubleday, $10, 480 pp.

MY DISAPPEARANCE IN PROVIDENCE AND OTHER STORIES

Alfred Andersch

Translated by Ralph Manheim

Doubleday, $7.95, 231 pp.

Ronald De Feo

DESPITE the appearance in recent years of important works by such relatively abstract, philosophically oriented writers as Thomas Bernhard, Peter Handke, Peter Bischel and Hans Erich Nossack, so much of contemporary German fiction still seems inspired by German history of the 1930s and '40s, with innumerable novels and short stories cast as memoirs, investigations and reconstructions of the Hitler years. Indeed, after the appearance of a host of accomplished and imaginative books focusing on this dark period (such instant classics as Böll's *Billiards at Half-Past Nine* and Grass's monumental *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years*) one assumed that German writers would look elsewhere for material. But fiction recalling or set in the period continued (alas, continues) to be written. In recent years we have had, to cite but a few examples, Böll's *Group Portrait with Lady*, Lenz's *The German Lesson*, Andersch's *Efraim's Book* and Herlin's *Commemorations*, all of which are concerned, almost obsessively, with the past.

It is understandable then that a reader's initial response to Alfred Andersch's massive new work, *Winterspelt*, might be, "Not again." For here we have a novel that is not only set during the Hitler period, specifically in the desperate, hopeless days (for Germany) just prior to the Battle of the Bulge, but one that attempts to rewrite a bit of history, or perhaps more accurately, to play out a possibility (to borrow from Andersch). What if, Andersch suggests, the commanding officer of a German infantry battalion stationed at the town of Winterspelt had decided to surrender his men to the American forces positioned outside the town. The author goes on to explore the possibility in a dense, elliptical and sometimes maddeningly digressive narrative of nearly 500 pages. But despite the pyrotechnical display, which is impressive, and the exhaustive examination of moral positions, which is also impressive, if occasionally ponderous, the work is really a grand piece of wishful thinking and is still another in a long line of novels reflecting German guilt (in this case inspired by the Wehrmacht's failure to break with Hitler and hurry the war to a conclusion).

Yet the way in which *Winterspelt* proceeds makes for a very odd book, not at all the documentary or historical novel one anticipates after reading the opening pages, which present excerpts from actual war memoirs and records as historical background for the fiction to come. Andersch makes no great effort to create verisimilitude. Even with all the references to troops and strategies and the intense focus on individual soldiers, his characters appear to exist in a closed, rather orderly little world, far removed from the devastating and chaotic war outside. Yet, as if he were writing a pure naturalistic novel, the author interrupts his intricate, chronologically jumbled fantasy at various points to provide biographical sketches of his characters and to relate supposedly very significant scenes from their lives. There are portraits of the main German figures who participate in the meditative drama: Major Dincklage, the officer who re-

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solves to surrender; his mistress, Käthe Lenk, a schoolteacher; Doctor Schefold, an art historian who has the odd habit of taking strolls across enemy lines; Hainstock, a Communist organizer and agitator who shares Käthe with Dincklage; and Reidel, a homosexual corporal whose bitterness and frustration bring about a tragedy and whose passionate, undisciplined nature contrasts sharply with the coolness and control exhibited by other characters. We are also granted glimpses of the American players, all military men, and given a detailed portrait of Captain Kimbrough, the Georgia-born head of the American forces who is puzzled and disturbed by Dincklage's plan.

But for all the time Andersch spends on these characters and for all his attempts to give them substance, they somehow never truly spring to life. And this is one of the reasons, at least, why the central action of the book—Dincklage's offer to surrender and the argument it stimulates—does not possess the urgency it should. The author confronts, but is unable to adequately solve, a very tricky stylistic problem. On the one hand, he wishes to remain distant from his characters, treating them in a cold, objective manner, as figures in a vast moral drama. On the other, he wishes to interest us in their lives. It isn't long before we realize that Andersch is working at cross purposes. Since he keeps so aloof from his creation, the world he attempts to project seems vague and remote, without sufficient detail and color to engage us. Naturalism is constantly at war here with abstraction.

Winterspelt might be described as a novel of suspended action, and this, unfortunately, results in another major problem. For unlike those classic novels in which an action or event is prolonged and left unresolved (K's quest in *The Castle*, for example, or the collateral Campaign in Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*), *Winterspelt* lacks the weight necessary to hold us for an extended time. Dincklage's decision and the endless discussions and negotiations it sparks simply do not have enough metaphorical, philosophical, or even satirical density.

As a whole, the short story collection, *My Disappearance in Providence* is more successful, though far less ambitious. We again find the efficient prose, the cool, measured narrative voice, and a strict guiding intelligence (which was the most attractive feature of the novel). Again that odd sense of distance is very much in evidence. But here it often works to the author's advantage, for most, if not all, of the pieces focus on outsiders (foreigners, prisoners of war, travelers), both physically and psychologically removed from their particular worlds, and the remoteness seems quite appropriate to the subject matter. "Even a Better House" is a cold, objective, almost report-like account of a retired German businessman who buys a manor house on the west coast of Ireland and in his isolated setting confronts the emptiness of his existence. The coldness of style complements, even enhances,the theme, as it does in the title story, in which the narrator tries in vain to resurrect his dead past, and in the anecdotal "A Morning at the Seashore," in which a typical family man on vacation strays too far not only from the beach but also from the security of his world.

In a number of stories Andersch alludes or refers directly to several significant events from his own life: his youthful communistic activities which eventually led to his imprisonment at Dachau, his desertion from the German army during the Italian campaign, and his confinement as a POW in the United States. The restraint and taste exercised in these pieces is admirable, but at times we feel that the subjects warrant somewhat more passion. In this respect, the novella "The Cherries of Freedom," the most ambitious piece in the collection, is a rather strange creation, an uneasy, yet interesting, mixture of dramatic detail and philosophical reflection. Here Andersch transforms the narrative of a wartime deserter into a meditation on the struggle to achieve freedom in an oppressive world.

Oddly enough, however, for all of the stylistically sophisticated stories in the book, it is "Daughter," the gentlest, least profound and adventurous, that is the most affecting. In this account of a German doctor who takes his daughter to Oxford, where she is to begin as a student, Andersch very well conveys the man's sense of guilt and loss as he leaves the girl to her strange surroundings.

Though this collection is a good (if unremarkable) one and though *Winterspelt*, for all its faults, is an impressive technical achievement, both books are quite disappointing when measured against Andersch's previous work, *Efraim's Book*. In that (still neglected) novel related by a world-weary journalist who probes his past while on a visit to Berlin, the full range of Andersch's technical skill was on display, as his constantly flowing narrative moved with great ease back and forth in time. But there was more: color, lyricism and above all, a strong sense of involvement. Efficiency and sophistication did not diminish feeling.

Literary underworld

LIVES AND LETTERS:
A.H. ORAGE, KATHERINE MANSFIELD, BEATRICE HASTINGS, MIDDLETON MURRY, S.S. KOTELIANSKY

John Carswell, ed.

New Directions, $15, 307 pp.

Jeffrey Meyers

THIS interesting, perceptive book concerns five representatives of a particular kind of literary life in the first half of this century. Virginia Woolf called them "the literary underworld," and they provide a lively contrast to the wealthy, well-educated but rather precious and now over-rated coterie of Bloomsbury. A. R. Orage, the gifted editor of the *New Age*, was the first to publish Pound, Mansfield, Muir, Hulme, Aldington, Read and Dylan Thomas. Orage's assistant, chief contributor and mistress was Beatrice Hastings, a talented satirist and fiery feminist, who never wore drawers and later had love affairs with Modigliani, Wyndham Lewis and the teenage prodigy, Raymond Radiguet.

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Katherine Mansfield, the central figure of this group, was closely connected to the others as disciple, rival, wife and adored friend. Her finest stories present a quintessential event, and contain subtle detail, precise phrasing, delicate observation and concentrated emotion. She is an intensely visual artist who expresses character through symbols, atmosphere and poetic evocations of mood. She is the only one whose fame rests securely on her literary work.

Katherine acknowledged that Orage had taught her to think and to write. Both Katherine and Beatrice looked alike, came from a similar colonial background, were bisexual, suffered miscarriages, collaborated as writers, admired and distrusted each other, fought bitterly, coming to blows and scattering the beads of their necklaces, and ended tragically. Katherine died of tuberculosis at age 34 in Gurdjieff's Institute at Fontainebleau in 1923; Beatrice gassed herself and her pet mouse twenty years later.

John Middleton Murry, the brilliant editor of *Rhythm*, the *Athenaeum* and the *Adelphi* and author of books on Swift, Blake and Keats, is now mainly remembered as the treacherous friend of Lawrence and the charming but irresponsible husband of Katherine. Carswell delineates Murry's instinctive sense of personal advantage, his pleasure in self-condemnation, his capacity to attribute exhalted motives to base actions, his paralyzing incapacity to deal with Katherine's disease, and the emotional and intellectual entanglements of his later career (only five years separated *The Necessity of Communism* from *The Necessity of Pacifism).*

In *Point Counter Point* Huxley excoriated Murry's style—"the dignified missionary tone, the mannered precision, the high-minded huffiness"—in the pathetically memorable figure of Burlap. Like Orage, Murry was a self-made intellectual and capable editor, who had a crippling strain of mysticism and was clever but not creative.

S. S. Koteliansky, a Jeremiah from the Ukraine, is best known as the translator of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov and Gorky, and as the friend and collaborator in this work with Katherine, Lawrence, Murry and the Woolfs. He was an expert in Russian matters when events like the Diaghilev Ballet and the 1917 Revolution aroused enthusiastic interest in literary London. He heightened this authority with an honorable and upright character, which enabled him to bear his dark fits of depression.

Carswell notes that all five figures, despite their intelligence, were capable of astounding failures of judgment. And it was Orage's attraction to mystical doctrines, combined with Murry's ineptitude and Kot's passion for all things Russian, which impelled Katherine to seek salvation from the fraudulent and ruthless Gurdjieff. He built a platform for her in his stables and ordered her to inhale the noxious odors of the beasts (a traditional Caucasian cure for tuberculosis). This regimen killed her in less than six weeks.

Carswell has made some valuable discoveries among the private papers of Koteliansky, including two moving tributes to Katherine from Dorothy Brett (her friend and Murry's lover) and from the devoted Kot, which emphasize that Katherine died courageously just as she was coming into her full powers as a writer. Brett wrote in 1922: "One loves her passionately, because it is impossible to do otherwise. She *understands* beyond all understanding. She has put herself up before herself—judged herself and cut out the bad." And after her death Kot, who remained essentially alone, despite his many friends, perceived: "Her division and 'secret sorrow' I felt from the very beginning of my meeting her, but the extent of her suffering I realised only a few months before her death. If I could write, I could show you simply and clearly that her flaws . . . were due to that terrible unhappiness when an individual human being, realizing his difference, is made every moment, by everything, to see his loneliness."

The following book should have been included in the Brotherhood Books List of March 2.

The Tumbleweeds: Somersaulting Up and Out of the City Streets, *by Frederick Johnson. Harper & Row, 1977. $10.00*

The author, a professional acrobat, gave up his career in 1953 to become a social worker in a Pueto Rican neighborhood on New York's West Side. There he trained five boys who developed a successful tumbling act and eventually performed on national TV. He describes the boys, what their fame meant to them, and what happened to each in later life. A warm and moving success story. (14 and up)

Guidebook to the American spirit

LITERARY PLACES:
A GUIDED PILGRIMAGE, NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND

John Deedy

Andrews & McMeel, $12.95, 312 pp.

Dennis Vellucci

JOHN DEEDY begins the preface to *Literary Places: A Guided Pilgrimage, New York and New England* with the modest claim that his book is "no more than its title"—a guide to the literary shrines of the Northeast where once lived those who helped create a literature that was distinctly American—Paine, Cooper, Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Longfellow, Dickinson, Twain, etc. But *Literary Places* is more than a travel book, for Deedy is not only a guide, but an accomplished writer with broad literary and scholarly interests. His style—conversational, always personal but never indulgent—and his easy, informal scholarship make for a remarkable journey.

While the notion of national character is somewhat extraneous to Deedy's purpose and is a subject he wisely ignores, there emerge from the concise biographies that are the substance of each chapter shared purposes and themes among the creators of American literature who collectively embody what might be identified as an American spirit. Characteristic preferences and prejudices are passed from one generation to another: Thomas Paine's articulation of

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self-reliance ("It is necessary to the happiness of man that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what one does not believe") recurs in Thoreau; Paine's dismissal of organized religion ("The world is my country, to do good my religion") re-appears in Emerson ("I have often thought that in order to be a good minister, it is necessary to leave the ministry").

Occasionally the similarities are surprising and belie the egalitarianism one expects. The vague aspirations to an American aristocracy that Cooper, Irving and Twain harbored in their personal lives, for example—and the way these were manifested in each of their homes, particularly Twain's ostentatious manor in Hartford—are ironic in light of their homey, populist stories. Cooper's vain, "upper-class proclivities" alienated him from his contemporaries; Irving, who wrote the stories that became part of American folklore during his 17 years in Spain, believed, like Cooper, that writing was a "gentleman's profession." Hardly an egalitarian, Irving despised crowds, was contemptuous of what he regarded as "inferior breeds" and complained mightily about "the 'disagreeable beasts' with whom he once had to share a sea passage."

Other writers had in common a commitment either to philosophies of life that found literary expression in works like *Leaves of Grass* and *Walden*, or to specific contemporary political issues, most notably the abolition of slavery. Of the latter group, Harriet Beecher Stowe is a prime representative. Believing herself divinely inspired to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe intended her book, Deedy writes, as "a message of peace and suasion that Southerners might respond to by voluntarily manumitting their slaves." Simon Legree's New England background notwithstanding, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (phenomenally popular in its time, selling 10,000 copies the first *week* of publication and 305,000 the first year) provoked a considerably more violent response.

Because Stowe was so dedicated to her timely mission, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Deedy observes, has suffered at the hands of history, its protagonist being "transformed in time from an object of compassion to a symbol of contempt." *Uncle Tom's Cabin* lacks the timeless quality of, say, *Leaves of Grass*, which Christopher Morley called "as important a work in American literature as the Gettysburg Address is in American history." In his splendid chapter on Whitman ("the champion of American intellectual independence"), Deedy attributes the timelessness of *Leaves of Grass* to its malleability: "For the nineteenth century, *Leaves of Grass* was the articulation of the philosophy of an expansionist America; young, energetic, bursting of muscle. For the first half of the twentieth . . . *Leaves* became democracy's testament through Whitman's almost encyclopedic formulation of patriotic and democratic slogans. More recently, in a personalist age, *Leaves of Grass* is the expression for the free spirit that resides in the individual. . . ." But no nineteenth century writer, in Deedy's view, had more a twentieth century temperament than Henry David Thoreau "as philosophical ecologist . . . as champion of blacks and Indians . . . as witness to principle."

Perhaps the single trait that unites the greatest number of America's literary pioneers is a reverence for the natural world. Nature is at the center of the poetry of writers as disparate as Whitman and Dickinson; it is Emerson's key to the divine and Thoreau's key to self-discovery; it figures, in varying degrees, in the work of Cooper, Irving, Melville, Hawthorne, Longfellow and Bronson Alcott, America's most impractical but ardent Utopian dreamer. Reverence for nature is further reflected in the places these writers made their homes—Chappaqua, Sunnyside, Amherst, Walden. "I thank God I was born on the banks of the Hudson," wrote Washington Irving. "I think it an invaluable advantage to be born and brought up in the neighborhood of some grand and noble object in Nature—a river, a lake, a mountain. We make a friendship with it—we, in a manner ally ourselves to it for life."

While Deedy deals mostly with nineteenth century figures—those who contributed to America's identity as it took shape and grew—there are brief sketches on twentieth century figures as well: Edith Wharton ("the diarist of a dying American aristocracy"), Willa Cather, Robert Frost, Eugene O'Neill. Of the 37 men and women profiled in *Literary Places*, two stand out. The first is Horace Greeley, the most authentic American folk figure in Deedy's collection. Today, Greeley is more celebrated for his famous advice—"Go West, young man"—than for his accomplishments as editor and publisher (Twain, Longfellow, Harte, Dickens and Karl Marx all appeared in the pages of his *Tribune*), and as labor union supporter, abolitionist and presidential candidate. Though an "erratic prophet" naive enough to embrace any fad, Greeley demonstrated a selfless humanitarianism when he went bail bond for Jefferson Davis—his ideological opposite—who had been in prison awaiting trial for two years, and effectively ruined his own chances of ever being elected President.

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The other figure who stands out seems, at first glance, an unlikely candidate for a book dealing with writers in America. But in his final section, "Some Foreign Writers Remembered," Deedy includes a long chapter on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, who spent his last years in New York and is buried in Poughkeepsie. The victim of church censorship for his radical reconciliation of religion with science, Teilhard remained loyal to his church and patient with his Jesuit superiors despite their narrow-mindedness. And in the company of writers whose chief characteristics were self-reliance, intellectual independence and reverence for nature, Teilhard's inclusion is singularly appropriate.

What is humane behavior?

THE CIVILIZING PROCESS

Norbert Elias

Urizen, $15, 310 pp.

George Ellard

SINCE even primitive cultures promote behavior and thought patterns which, though radically different from our own, are no less rational, we can easily fall prey to a facile relativism which denies that there are qualitative differences among various ways of life. Few of us, however, would abandon the advantages of our own culture for a mud-hut in the Amazon, and, though the modern industrial state might be the greatest threat to the survival of other life-worlds, it is still the only social pattern thus far capable of recognizing and systemically recording the variety of human forms. A more disturbing kind of relativism, however, insists that our own culture is not the readily approachable, organic whole we naively assume it to be; Beethoven (and even more likely, Erasmus) might not be one of us at all. In *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias, who is himself no relativist, nonetheless gives substance to the claim that earlier moments of our history actually represent forms of life as radically different from our own and as inaccessible as any primitive society: our culture is the result of an unregulated process, the stages of which we have forgotten or have never clearly recognized in the first place.

Erasmus's text on the social education of boys (*De Civilitate Morum Puerilium*, 1530) is the pivot of this entertaining and scholarly work. Erasmus speaks of many things that have since his day become unspeakable and of many others that are now taken for granted. He can write without embarrassment of the bodily functions, of breaking wind, of nudity, of relations between the sexes, of spitting. His candor should not seem odd, for these things were not the objects of shame they are for us today. Life in the middle ages was much less subject to social regulation (though as one fifteenth century manual of etiquette observes, it *is* unseemly to blow one's nose into the tablecloth).

Elias takes us back to those periods in our history when adults had to be taught how to behave, when the grown-up was much less distinguishable from the child. The emotional life as well as the rational consciousness of people who eat communally, taking meat with their fingers from the same plate and wine from the same cup, have a structure and character different from ours. Their world is conditioned by relationships and conduct which, to our standards, are embarrassing, if not disgusting. Fewer barriers are erected between bodies, the threshhold of embarrassment is higher, the structure of the ego, different. Elias shows how people in our society are molded more deliberately, how the coercion they exert on each other is more intense and the demand for good behavior, more emphatic.

But "good behavior" is not naturally or divinely given; it is an historical phenomenon, and consequently it changes as the culture changes. Modes of speech, emotional and behavioral patterns *become* acceptable, says Elias, because initially they are the practices one group uses to distinguish itself from other social strata. Rational justifications for prohibiting certain behavior (facts about hygiene, for example) come long after we have learned to be embarrassed and repelled by that behavior. Though the maturing individual must "in his short history pass once more through some of the processes that his society has traversed in its long history," democratization and the efficiency of the nuclear family as an instrument of social control have limited the diversity of the less homogeneous and regulated cultures out of which ours has grown.

The Civilizing Process is an account of how we got here from there. First published in German in 1939, it has only recently gotten the attention it deserves. The book is engrossing and even liberating in that it does explain why we behave as we do (or at least how we come to behave as we do). It is also disturbing in that such things (as Plato suspected) might best be kept secret. In volume II, scheduled to appear in translation later this year, Elias explains the mechanism by which a change in social structure (the growing centralization of state power and the rise of national consciousness) has led to the radical transformation of the human personality and its emotional life. We must, of course, understand these changes and the ways structural developments are mirrored inpersonality growth before we can be truly responsible for our actions or consciously construct a society which fosters humane behavior.

This leads to the major problem raised by Elias's research: Just what is humane behavior? To show the genesis of norms is often to demystify and to devalue them. But are we really to say that the shame that rises when we recognize in ourselves something of our animal nature, the shame that accompanies our judgment of My-Lai and the Gulag, is no more than a by-product of social conditioning? I do not suggest that Elias would say such a thing, but his work does make moral certainty seem a lot less attainable. Perhaps that's not so bad, but it is important to distinguish the genesis of an action from its significance. After all, Napoleon thought that he was simply making his rule more effective by imposing a uniform code of law on the territories he

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conquered. It does not take a great deal of historical insight to realize that he was doing much more, that the law is the most effective weapon against tyranny ever devised. By pointing to the history of our more and institutions, Elias helps us recognize their significance, something indispensable to those who would consciously and intelligently fashion the future.

Under the Lasch

HAVEN IN A HEARTLESS WORLD:
THE FAMILY BESIEGED

Christopher Lasch

Basic Books, $12.95, 230 pp.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

IN *Haven in a Heartless World,* Christopher Lasch, a distinguished observer of American life and thought, turns his attention to one of the benchmarks of our contemporary malaise, the "family besieged." He finds in the family a last, weak holdout against the total victory of predatory capitalist individualism, one offering precious little succor for the battered soul. As the heartless public world increasingly invades our private and most hallowed havens they, too, are rendered heartless or survive as pitifully inadequate atavisms, futile as bulwarks against the all-encompassing tawdriness which surrounds them. Lasch is a bold thinker who is willing to walk to the edge of the abyss and peer over, a journey more timid souls would shrink from in terror or revulsion. Perhaps Lasch decided that *Haven*'s overinflated prose was necessary, first, to gain people's attention and, second, to make his not terribly popular case. But the result of all the hyperbole is that Lasch's characterization of the present represents too wholesale a condemnation and too bitter a denunciation to be fully convincing. One expects intensity and audacity from Lasch, and it is here in abundance, but one doesn't anticipate the repeated slides into intemperate, hostile, and despairing declamations.

Lasch salvages next to nothing from the wreckage. Our "apparent" movements of liberation are, finally, pseudo-movements which reinforce and hasten the decay and crisis they seek to cure and which spawned them in the first place. Human social life and relations, despite the saving patina of "appearances," are crass, calculating, superficial, and anxiety-ridden. New and more insidious modes of social control force themselves relentlessly upon human beings in every sphere and walk of life. Why is this happening?

Culprits and malefactors abound in *Haven in a Heartless World.* A by no means exhaustive list of Lasch's villains includes bureaucracies and bureaucrats; bourgeois domination and its antithesis, feminism; schools and social welfare agencies; the applied science of social control and its mainstream academic handmaidens (here Lasch is right on target in seeing essential links between applied policy sciences, the so-called "scientific study of society," and new and more sophisticated forms of technological control); the theory and practice of the "culture and personality" school whose commitment to a superficial brand of environmental determinism and learning theory which led to a stress on "non-deviance" and enforced demands for conformist behavior; Parsonian sociology in which social equilibrium or stasis becomes man's most noble achievement and his highest aspiration; those post-Freudian revisionists who bowdlerized psychoanalytic theory in order to make it more palatable or compatible with a number of political ideologies and, in the process, eroded the liberatory ends Freud's work has presaged; the cult of domesticity; school counselors; the "new family" of "life styles" and "spontaneous, non-binding, non-exclusive relationships" in which any long-term commitment to another human being is despised (along with parenting) as a sign of being "hung-up"; cynical pop-psych gurus unambivalently preaching the death of the family and thus paving the way for total state control; all self-righteous and priggish forces of organized virtue; and the "remoteness and self-effacement of the American parent, the desexualization of motherhood, and the coolness that has come to characterize domestic relations. . . ." (179)

Not much has been left out. Confronted with this roll call of horrors Lasch could not go on to proffer any hope that private virtue might flourish despite all and the beleaguered family might survive. Indeed, if one accepts Lasch's interrelated thesis that the state controls "not merely the individual's body but as much of his spirit as it can preempt; not merely his outer but his inner life as well; not merely the public realm but the darkest corners of private life, formerly inaccessible to political domination"; that the citizen's "entire existence has now been subjected to social direction"; and that society itself "has taken over socialization or subjected the family to increasingly effective control," one is committed to his despair and cynicism as well.

But is Lasch convincing—is his

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characterization a compelling and plausible one? Would, or could, it gain acceptance in the eyes of social participants themselves? Let's look a bit closer at his views. What "increasingly effective control" of the family and private life does Lasch have in mind? How does the government's long arm extend into the interstices of inner life—through what mediating agencies, institutions, and relationships? That government and big business have long collaborated to manipulate the American economy in ways that constrain and control the lives of most Americans; that public school teachers sometimes treat parents with derision or sugary contempt; that guidance counselors, therapists, and administrators sometimes intrude into the family scene armed with well-meaning advice, well-laid plans and thinly-veiled threats; and that the traditional bases of community have broken down or are in peril—all this and more is surely correct.

But Lasch's thesis, if it is to convince us, requires more and further evidence and that he fails to provide. We should have meticulous, depth probing and interpretations of the self-understandings of real families in a variety of social contexts in order that the discussion might be shifted from its depersonalized abstractedness. Have families been drained of their normative meaning in Midwest farming communities as well as urban-academic centers in the Northeast? Would Lasch's discussion help *them* to understand *their own dilemma*—would he offer them terms of analysis which might enable them to see beneath the surface of things? Are we really, all of us, one-dimensional persons or is it not instead the case that the argument for our one-dimensionality is a one-dimensional argument?

For most of us most of the time families, for better or for worse, remain the locus of our most powerful, ambivalent, and meaningful emotional ties and self-identities. The family may be Lasch's desiccated husk but thus far it has stubbornly refused to blow away, despite the chill winds of apocalyptic social criticism and abominable public policies. If the family had indeed been as drained of its emotional intensity as Lasch claims why do we still care so much, fret so much, lament so much, rejoice so much—despite the social workers, bureaucrats, officious educators, and capitalist invasions?

Lasch, I fear, has forgotton precisely what was meant to be the target of his book in his headlong plunge into criticism and despair. As a result he knocks nearly everything that appears in his text flat, but by the book's end Lasch has not so much frightened us as put us on guard that we are reading some things that are true but are by no means either the whole truth or the simple truth. For those who remain credulous and who are prepared to accept Lasch's characterization of events and the implications which flow from them, the result will ultimately be a draining of the meaning of the family and of family relations as lived,a further erosion of the family's normative significance coupled with the extension, paradoxically of precisely that brutalization of social life Lasch himself indicts as characteristic of our age. For having internalized Lasch's view one will see the world through his eyes. If the dreadful has already happened, it should not surprise us that it happens again, everyday, over and over.

Lasch would do well to immerse himself in the later works of Robert Coles, a thinker and public figure quite unlike Lasch himself but one concerned with many of the same issues of the family, social relationships, and politics. Coles, to be sure, tends at times to be a bit Pollyanna-ish, but that's all right. Coles's thirst for moral uplift is as pronounced as Lasch's impulse to quash each and every hint of solace in sight. But Coles offers one enormous advantage to the political thinker and the average reader alike: he is treating us to complex, thickly textured portraits of real human beings, men, women, and children, in real social locations, living in and through genuine political and moral crisis. *Angst* may be "in" this season, but if one has to construct cardboard people (I think they are sometimes called "ideal types") in order to smash them and their entire edifice down (for only catastrophe can justify the anguish one feels) who will come to pick up the pieces, why, and to what end? The project of depicting one-dimensional people and then wiping them out can be great fun, I suppose, and it may even illumine some terribly important truths in the hands of a provocative thinker like Lasch. But what happens next?

In brief

NEIGHBORS IN CONFLICT: THE IRISH, GERMANS, JEWS, AND ITALIANS OF NEW YORK CITY, 1929-1941, *by Ronald H. Bayor, The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 232 pp.*

Neighbors In Conflict is a social history of ethnic relations in New York City during the depression years. While Bayor relies mostly on written sources, such as the ethnic presses, diocesan newspapers, and municipal archives, he also employs census tract data, some personal interviews, and some transcribed interviews from the Columbia University Oral History Project. (He notes that the papers of Cardinal Spellman are not available and that he was disappointed with the sources housed at the Brooklyn Diocese Archives, although he does not say why.)

While the book's title suggests a close and contextual look at neighborhood ethnic relations, only two are inspected at length, the Irish-Jewish conflicts in Washington Heights and in the South Bronx. Students of ethnic relations will not find much new information nor any significant re-interpretations of the material. But both scholars and others will find it a useful reference book. While his quoting of the Brooklyn *Tablet* during this period seemed excessive to me, Bayor makes the requisite qualifications. He observes that Catholics in general did not support Franco, that many Catholics opposed Father Charles E. Coughlin, and that ethnicity and religion were never the sole determining factor in either political endorsement or voting.

He observes that many Jews too quickly found anti-Semitic implications in Italian and German non-political pride of nationality. He observes that support among ethnics for the anti-Semitic movements of the period correlated

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strongly with economic variables such as unemployment, relief work, and job insecurity. In his interpretation of ethnic conflict Bayor wisely minimizes the significance of psychological factors, such as a putative "authoritarian personality structure" and employs some standard sociological explanations, such as status-insecurity, loss of mobility opportunities, and direct economic competition.

His last and only analytic chapter entitled "On Ethnic Conflict," consists of a scant four pages of some basic sociology. He observes that conflict can be based on rational and irrational grounds, that not all conflict is bad, and that ethnic-religious conflicts will persist: ". . . America will probably see these conflicts, in varying degrees of intensity, wax and wane many times in the future."

I think some readers will miss a more rigorous connection between group conflict and the economic structure of society which, Bayor observes, is the catalyst of much of the periodic group animosity he reports and anticipates. But most will find it a useful reference work.

JAMES R. KELLY

THE GREAT AMERICAN NEWSPAPER: *The Rise and Fall of the Village Voice, by Kevin Michael McAuliffe, Scribners, $14.95, 473 pp.*

Twice a week, on the way from *Commonweal* to Grand Central Station, I put out 25 cents for the *New York Post* and feel that I am simply giving the quarter away. Every Wednesday I hand over 60 cents for *The Village Voice,* and am beginning to feel the same way. I hang on for the Off-Off Broadway reviews—and above all for Andrew Sarris, whose just-published collection of film reviews, *Politics and Cinema* (Columbia University Press, $12.95 [206 pp.] marks him again as a tough-minded,independent critic I should not try to do without. I used to hang on for Alexander Cockburn's Press Clips hoping to glean, beyond his cynical snickers and pet hates, some useful background stuff to share with my journalism classes. No more. One of his recent columns made a joke out of Karen Quinlan. And Kevin Michael McAuliffe's persuasive history of *The Voice* portrays tough-guy-in-print Cockburn as the office toady, constantly sidling up to the most powerful man in the room.

In McAuliffe's version, there is the good old *Voice,* the mirror of the emerging counter-culture, the "writers" newspaper, where founder-editor Dan Wolf let bright, young, mixed-up, floundering men and women pour out their guts, politics and sensibilities—and thus caught the imagination of a changing America—and the bad, new *Voice* where a succession of not-to-be-trusted money-men like Carter Burden ("willful . . . wimpy . . . supine . . . sneaky . . . spoiled"), Clay Felker and Rupert Murdoch have changed it into a packaged commodity written to match the editors' notion of what will sell.

The real mystery of *The Voice* seems to be how a group of people who disliked and mistrusted one another so much could put out a paper at all.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

Correspondence

(Continued from page 130)

in South Africa, Chile, Argentina, or South Korea." The implication is that peace organizations regularly respond with energy to ordinary imprisonments in Chile, Argentina, etc. This is a gross misrepresentation of fact—daily abductions, tortures and killing occur on a large scale, mostly unprotested. A second deception is the equating of the Minh case with, say Biko, or the Argentinian torture-killing plague. Even Forest does not claim that Minh was tortured or killed, whereas Biko and literally thousands of Argentinians and Chileans have been.

Forest consistently disregards the fact that the truly massive human rights violations in Vietnam were and continue to be those of the United States, which left a devastated land and people. Since 1975 hundreds of farmers have died from exploding ordnance left by U.S. bombers, and the prostitutes, drug addicts and diseased in body and mind have been left to suffer unaided by the former invader.The neglect of the human rights issues involved here (including problems of survival and rehabilitation) by people like Jim Forest is scandalous. It is not merely a question of neglect—this self-righteous focus on a few selected and privileged individuals, in a complex and difficult environment, has contributed to the further savaging of a huge army of victims (still denied even the right to trade, let alone to rceive aid for the victims of an unprovoked assault). Jim Forest, will you not get out and protest the human rights violation of the next Loatian or South Vietnamese farmer whose legs are severed by an exploding land mine?

EDWARD S. HERMAN

The author replies

I imagine Mr. Herman sleeps best at night if first delivered of a fresh indictment of U.S. evils, but a broadside at anyone disturbed at torture and death under Marxist political sponsorship is an acceptable alternative.

What magic there is in words. One paragraph can serve as lynch mob, in this case with myself as proposed mobile. I am guilty of bringing aid and comfort to the U.S. government, all for regretting

REVIEWERS

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the death of a Vietnamese monk a bit like Thomas Merton, a bit like Martin Luther King, Jr. Drawing attention to him, I have deflected attention from the rise of a "literal empire of torture and death squads in the U.S. sphere of influence. . . ."

Would it have been better, in Mr. Herman's view, had the Wilmington Ten or the jailed Berrigans gone unreported in the press of the Soviet bloc? Should the assassination of Dr. King be passed without expression of horror or shock except in American media? Must the conscience of the world have so parochial a management that the death of people like Thich Thien Minh has no right to be noticed except where such news would be suppressed?

Mr. Herman is annoyed that I compared the monk's death with that of a New Yorker, pointing out the New Yorker died of murder. But the analogy was not with the cause-line of their death certificates, but rather the silence that proceeded their passing. For six months both Amnesty International and the International Fellowship of Reconciliation tried to stimulate appeals to Hanoi for this crippled pacifist religious leader whose previous imprisonment by the Saigon government *had* occasioned numerous appeals, sufficient to effect his release. This time there was little response.

But was Thich Thien Minh's death something more than the result of old age or illness in prison—is it possibly the result of brutality? I didn't imagine so when I wrote the article for *Commonweal,* but now there is reason to believe otherwise. A letter from a brother monk in Vietnam reached us last week: "At the prison of Hang Sanh, Gia Dinh, Thich Thien Minh was put in a dark and horrid cell. He did not have the chance to meet his fellow monks there since the previous year. When the prison officer ordered him to take off his monk's robe, he said he had been wearing the brown robe for 41 years and was so used to it he would not be comfortable in any other kind of dress. The cadre wanted to intimidate him. He ordered the monk to be stripped of all his clothes and to be punished naked for one week for disobedience. . . . This is the only detail we presently know of his six months' life in prison, a detail disclosed by a jail worker."

On October 20, three days after Thich Thien Minh's death, news of the event reached the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation in France and was reported to the press. In Hanoi the following day, a Hanoi official confirmed the news to the *Agence France Presse*, charging that Thich Thien Minh had been jailed "because of serious acts of opposition to the government." Cause of death was said to be cerebral hemorrhage. (Cerebral hemorrhage was listed as the cause of death of another noted Vietnamese prisoner in 1978, Tran Van Tuyen, chairman of the Vietnamese chapter of the International League for Human Rights.)

Leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church came to the prison to claim the remains for funeral rites. They were not allowed to take possession of the body or to see any part of it other than the face, by then bearded. "Why," the correspondent writes, "was it prohibited to touch the body of Thich Thien Minh? Why was the body so well covered? And why everytime an important figure dies in prison is his death due to cerebral hemorrhage?"

The writer goes on to note that eventually there will be witnesses to events after the first week. "Today they are silent, but tomorrow they may be able to tell us, and shed light on the darkness. Thich Thien Minh fought for social justice and was imprisoned by three consecutive regimes. He suffered because he wanted to speak out for peace and for the oppressed and to awaken the conscience of each one of us."

There are others of whom this might be said in South Africa, Argentina, South Korea, the Soviet Union and, for that matter, the United States. In these and other countries there are people risking their lives to awaken public conscience. But how strange to hear we must respond only to those suffering within a particular power bloc. Mr. Herman would make us as blinkered politically as we used to be religiously. Will he argue that bussing is a threat to the neighborhood school? That the world would be clean if only each person swept the pavement in front of his own door?

There is a happy bit of news to add. The death of Thich Thien Minh jolted many appeals to the Hanoi government for others still in jail, especially two who were reported near death. Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, the former and present General Secretaries of the Unified Buddhist Church, have now been released, as well as two others for whom Amnesty International and IFOR had intervened. (An appeal for 37 other Buddhist leaders still in prison has been started.)

We have had good luck in recent months with similar efforts for prisoners in South Africa and Argentina, though Mr. Herman is quite right that these hard-won successes are far too few. But I doubt his approach, at least if it involves the voice used in this letter, will open any prison doors.

JAMES H. FOREST
Coordinator,
Int'l Fellowship of Reconciliation
Alkmaar, Holland

Obscurity transcended

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: Apologies to Robert W. Marrion [Correspondence, Jan. 19] for obscure terminology in my comparison of Catholic social thought and liberal social thought. At the risk of further confusion, I hope Mr. Marrion will let me try again.

I use the term "cyclical-organic" to refer to two aspects of the traditional Catholic interpretation of society. "Cyclical" refers to the fact that pre-modern Catholicism tended to see society as undergoing mainly rhythmic changes in which little was truly new. Thus like the passage of nature through the seasons, or of human life through biological stages, life went round and round, but basically remained constant, at least in its pattern. "Organic" refers to the pre-modern view that society formed a single body, and was not simply a lot of parts arbitrarily thrown together in voluntary arrangements regulated by individual contracts. The model for interpreting the society was the human body, and each piece had its place, like the brain and the

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food in our own bodies. The parts were quite distinct, apparently put that way by God, and not interchangeable. Modern "equality" was a jarring idea for the organic view, at least traditionally, since functional differences were quite stressed. In addition, as in the body, only those at the top (e.g., the brain) had authority, and within this authority the executive, legislative, and judicial functions belonged to a single person (King, Pope, Bishop, Pastor, etc.).

To a great degree, the main problematic for Catholicism in the modern period has been to accommodate itself to an entirely different understanding of society which flowed out of the Enlightenment. This accommodation has been accomplished more in the external relations of the church with the world around it than in the church's own internal life. Thus, while the church moves mainly in a liberal world, it maintains much of the traditional view in its own internal structure. This is in part a problem, but in other ways an asset, at least for a critique of liberalism.

The liberal view of society I refer to as "linear-fragmented" in contrast to the traditional "cyclical-organic." "Linear" refers to a view of history which is not a circle going round and round with nothing really new, but an evolutionary line of supposed progress, in which, it is hoped, things get better than they were in the past and certainly are different. "Fragmented" refers to the organization of society which, rather than focusing on the common good (the whole), highlights the individual or the interest group (the part). These in turn are seen as more loosely related, even as disparate and competitive forces in the social market system. This is reflected in our government structure which divides the executive, judicial, and legislative branches, and in the society's internal pluralism, reflected at least in two political parties (and within them by numerous factions). The model is the machine, rather than the body.

Either view has its strengths and weaknesses, and a corrective to its deviance. The corrective to the traditional (cyclical-organic) interpretation of society is the principle of "subsidiarity," which means that nothing should be done at a higher level which can be done at a lower level. We would call this decentralization. The corrective to the liberal interpretation is "counter-vailing power" which tries to balance individual against individual and interest group against interest group, so that the egoism of no single person or group can prevail over the others. At the extreme, the primary value in the traditional model is the common good; in the liberal model self-interest.

My fear for liberalism, at this point in its history, is that its internal dynamic has been eroding community and creating a fragmented society. Now as the world becomes more interdependent, and almost every aspect of social policy becomes a matter of national security, it is the temptation of the military to step in and run the society as a theoretically organic unit. This is the source, I believe, behind the crisis of democracy in the Third World, and perhaps eventually in the First World as well.

I wonder, therefore, if liberalism would not be complemented by more stress on the organic and cylical dimensions of society, linked in turn to a stress on real subsidiarity or decentralization. Early Catholic social thought was strong on these aspects, but was set within a nostalgic, sometimes even reactionary framework which looked back to premodern agrarian societies. In the judgment of some, it did not understand many of the creatively conflictive dimensions of the new society. For that reason many have begun to explore a linkage between the traditional Catholic orientation and a future-oriented socialist critique of liberalism. Whether a humanistic socialist framework may be meaningful is already becoming an important debate for both Catholic and liberal social thought.

If this further compounds the obscurity, double apologies.

JOE HOLLAND

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